

MARVEL MASTERWORKS®
THE FANTASTIC FOUR®
VOLUME 19



THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 204-218
& ANNUAL No. 14

MARV WOLFMAN & JOHN BYRNE
WITH BILL MANTLO & KEITH POLLARD

MARVEL

MARVEL MASTERWORKS
PRESENTS

THE Fantastic FOUR

VOLUME 19

COLLECTING

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 204-218
& ANNUAL No. 14

MARV WOLFMAN • JOHN BYRNE
WITH BILL MANTLO & KEITH POLLARD



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FANTASTIC FOUR CREATED BY STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY

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CONTENTS

Introduction by Marv Wolfman

The Fantastic Four #204, March 1979

“The Andromeda Attack!”

The Fantastic Four #205, April 1979

“When Worlds Die!”

The Fantastic Four #206, May 1979

“The Death of...the Fantastic Four!”

The Fantastic Four #207, June 1979

“Might of the Monocle!”

The Fantastic Four #208, July 1979

“The Power of the Sphinx!”

The Fantastic Four #209, August 1979

“Trapped in the Sargasso of Space!”

The Fantastic Four #210, September 1979

“In Search of Galactus”

The Fantastic Four #211, October 1979

“If This Be Terrax”

The Fantastic Four #212, November 1979

“The Battle of the Titans!”

The Fantastic Four #213, December 1979

“In Final Battle!”

The Fantastic Four #214, January 1980

“...And Then There Was--One!”

The Fantastic Four Annual #14, 1979

“Cat’s-Paw!”

“A Gallery of the Fantastic Four’s Most Famous Foes!”

The Fantastic Four #215, February 1980

“Blastaar!”

The Fantastic Four #216, March 1980

“Where There Be Gods!”

The Fantastic Four #217, April 1980

“Masquerade!”

The Fantastic Four #218, May 1980

“When a Spider-Man Comes Calling!”



INTRODUCTION

BY MARV WOLFMAN

SPOILER WARNING: To talk about the stories being collected in this book, I'm going to have to reveal certain vital plot points. If you don't want anything spoiled, I suggest you read all the stories first, then come back here. I'll remind you again in a bit. Okay? Now let's get down to business.

Comic book fans had no idea their world was about to totally change when, in 1961, the first issue of a brand-new, never-before-seen comic, suddenly and unannounced, appeared on the newsstand comic book racks.

For a very long time comics had been aimed at young kids, their average age somewhere between six and 14. I'd been such a kid, avidly reading every comic I could get my hands on, which, yes, included kiddie comics like *Casper the Friendly Ghost* and teen characters such as Archie and Jughead. I read all those books, but the comics I truly loved were the super hero titles.

I bought every super hero comic published. Of course back then that wasn't difficult since you could probably list all of them on the fingers of two hands and have at least one finger left over.

As I said, I loved those books, but as I hit 14-15, I started to want more than heroes that, while really good, were still being written for an audience I was rapidly aging out of.

So, just before I might have given up reading comics all together, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby came out with a brand-new title that was definitely meant for the quickly aging baby boomers.

The Fantastic Four.

It's not like the earliest issues were meant for 15 and older, but we recognized something was going on with them; the heroes did not act like the super heroes we grew up with. In the beginning, they didn't wear costumes. The characters argued with each other and even insulted each other. They weren't the always perfect adults we'd read about before; they had problems and questions and made major mistakes. They were something new.

As *The Fantastic Four* continued, we started to see ideas and characters we never could have imagined: Doctor Doom, Sub-Mariner, Galactus, the Silver Surfer, the Inhumans, the Black Panther, and many more. More Marvel Comics came out, and more DC Comics started writing up to the age of the burgeoning teen readers rather than down to the youngest kids.

A comic book renaissance began, and those of us who were the right age got to watch comics grow up with us. It was an amazing time.

So you can imagine how stunned I was that a mere 16 years after *The Fantastic Four* debuted (today we create subplots that go on for more than 16 years), I was now writing the very book that kept me buying comics even as I started to get "too old" to read some of them.

Stan and Jack had created the FF so they could do any type of story they wanted. As the new *FF* writer, I wanted to write about a huge interstellar war. Something larger than anything we'd seen before, even while setting up some smaller, more human problems that would plague our foursome. I also wanted to clear up a problem in the FF mythology that had been bothering me for years. And that's exactly where this collection begins.

Drawn by the wonderful Keith Pollard and the legendary Joe Sinnott, we opened *Fantastic Four* #204 with the sudden appearance of Adora, an alien Suzerain queen who had teleported to Earth, a rampaging Skrull warrior who was out to kill her, and Rhomann Dey, a soldier in the Nova Corps. We mixed this giant science-fiction story with a smaller personal story about Johnny Storm going back to college to discover who he was when he wasn't the Human Torch.

Of course, this being *The Fantastic Four*, small stories had a tendency to become huge. And deadly. And it was important for me that Johnny not go into space with the others for reasons that would not reveal themselves for many months.

Artist Keith Pollard shined with *FF* #205. The story opened with an incredible double-page spread of the FF appearing on the planet Xandar in the Andromeda galaxy. The FF found themselves in the middle of a massive war between Skrulls and the Nova Corps, a group I had created in the pages of *The Man Called Nova*, another Marvel book I was writing at the time.

Meanwhile, on Earth, we continued Johnny Storm's more personal story by bringing in the Monocle, an almost forgotten Marvel villain. Finally, if Keith's double-page war spread didn't knock your socks off, his full-page shot of the Xandar's living computer definitely will. I'm still blown away by this.

Issue #206 featured a rather lopsided trial of the FF. Needless to say you will never see a TV show called *Law & Order: Skrull World*. Because we were dealing with the Skrulls, judgment against the FF was decided long before the trial began, and their punishment of death was handed out in the most unexpected way possible.

An aside: It's great if you can manipulate your stories to lead the readers to believe one thing (in this case that Johnny's school concerns led him to stay behind so we could do the Monocle fight) while the truth was he had to take leave of the group so we could set up a much bigger story that could not include him. At least not yet.

Keith and I worked together really well, which made each issue a delight to work on. In a universe-sized saga such as this one, where huge visuals were essential, it demanded that the artist be a clear storyteller. Keith was all that and more. There was virtually nothing I could ask of him that Keith couldn't draw, and that allowed me to make the story even bigger and grander.

Oh, one thing more. I'm going to give away the ending, so remember, SPOILER WARNING:

Nova and a crew of his eight worst villains arrive in the Andromeda Galaxy just in time to blow up the ship the FF are on. How are they ever going to get out of this?

The next issue, "Might Of The Monocle," won't answer your question. Why? Because in this issue we return to Earth for an all-Human Torch story, guest-starring your friendly, neighborhood Spider-Man. This is more than just a one-issue fight as it plays off Johnny Storm's life and sets up an even larger storyline. That's how one keeps the suspense going.

But since we couldn't keep the readers dangling too long, issue #208 returns us to space where the FF has to deal with their death sentence, and what an execution means on the Skrull world.

And yes, here comes another handy-dandy SPOILER WARNING: Remember, if you don't want to know what is happening to the FF, read the actual stories, then come back. We'll wait.

Hum hum hum hum hummm...

You're back? Great. We missed you.

When the Skrulls judged the FF guilty of every crime in the book, including not returning old library books, they were blasted with an aging ray. The Skrulls don't simply kill you; they age you so you suffer a painful death. In this issue, the FF begin aging, and the first symptom is a slow loss of their powers.

Aging the FF made for a good cliffhanger kind of story, and I certainly wanted that, but I had an ulterior motive in mind. We'll talk about that soon enough.

The FF's starship has been blown up, but *yadda yadda*, they obviously survive. You'll just have to read the story to find out how. Now that the FF's trial is over and the aging ray hit them, there was no purpose in keeping Johnny back on Earth. So he was teleported to Xandar and reunited with the group.

Meanwhile, the fragile alliance Nova has with his enemies begins to unravel. And wait till you see Keith Pollard's incredible full-page shot of the "Furshlugginer" Sphinx. (Yeah, I can't believe I wrote that line back then, either.)

The Sphinx's power and size grows beyond containment. Reed decides the only way to stop him is to recruit the one being in the universe who might be powerful enough to help them defeat Sphinx:

Galactus.

Yes, I said I wanted big. And you don't get much bigger than a giant-sized Sphinx and Galactus.

Keith Pollard had to leave the FF (though he and I continued on *The Amazing Spider-Man*) and so issue #209 brought artist John Byrne to *The Fantastic Four* for the first time. I must admit John and I were never close, but John's art was excellent and he seemed tailor-made for the FF. In fact, a few years later, John wrote and drew the book and did some wonderful stories.

Issue #209 begins our heroes' search for Galactus. This issue features a one-issue plot set inside the larger tale, but it's mostly famous, or perhaps infamous, for a new addition to the FF: The **H**umanoid **E**xperimental **R**obot **B**-type **I**ntegrated **E**lectronics, or H.E.R.B.I.E. for short.

Here's the truth. The FF had recently been turned into a network cartoon show. That was big news. But back in those prehistoric days of Saturday morning animation, the networks didn't want the Human Torch as a character on the show. They were afraid little kids would set themselves on fire to be like the Torch.

Seriously.

So the Torch was out, and someone came up with the robot H.E.R.B.I.E. as his replacement. Needless to say we were asked (ordered!) to put the robot in the comic and that meant it was my job to make that stupid walking garbage can as acceptable as I could.

I had fun with H.E.R.B.I.E., but only because I decided not to take him seriously. In the pages of *FF* we actually said that the cartoon show producers asked the FF to add H.E.R.B.I.E. to their team. And to explain why the Torch was not part of the show, Johnny explained he was out of town when the contracts had to be signed. It was all rather silly, but the fans realized we were having fun and went with it. Or at least didn't threaten to exterminate us.

As we began issue #210, Reed, Sue and Ben were aging so rapidly they had less than two days before they would die of old age. Along with Johnny, who was not affected and therefore still had all his powers, the FF found Galactus' ship, but the trick now was to get his attention. Not an easy task when Galactus thought of humans as little more than brainless ants.

I loved writing Galactus' self-important dialogue. It was also a great thrill to be able to write him because, when I was a kid visiting Jack Kirby's home on Long Island, I watched as he drew pages from Galactus' first appearance.

Issue #211 featured the rapidly aging FF trying to find Galactus a new herald. While trying to figure out what this herald should be like, it suddenly struck me that Galactus' heralds had all been inspired by natural elements: The Silver Surfer was based on the riders of the sea. Gabriel was an air walker. Firelord commanded flame. You had water, air and fire. The only natural element left was small "e" earth.

And thus was born Terrax the Tamer.

With this new earth-controlling herald at his side, Galactus and the FF worked together to find and destroy the Sphinx.

I have to say I had forgotten how startlingly different *FF* #212 was. With the exception of a short flashback, the Fantastic Four, aged and weak, appeared in only three pages of the book. Instead, the issue dealt with the origin of the Sphinx, and the coming battle between him and Galactus. Even without the FF, this was a powerful story and John's art, especially on the double-pager as Sphinx rebuilds ancient Egypt, was excellent. I also loved the Kirby-esque fight between Galactus and Sphinx. Large panels. Fantastic punches. Overblown dialogue. The works!

However, Sue had already collapsed of old age, and as our villains battled each other, Ben fell as well.

I don't intend to reveal the climax of the battle; you'll have to experience it yourself. But as the story closes, Reed also succumbs to old age.

Issue #214, again by me, John Byrne and Joe Sinnott, opened with Reed, Ben and Sue placed in stasis pods, dying. Johnny was alone and every avenue of hope to save them was quickly shot down. He's at his breaking

point. This, then, is the culmination of Johnny's problems that began in issue #204. This was a story about Johnny growing up.

As for Reed, Sue and Ben, without saying how Johnny helped them to become young again — What? You thought they stayed ancient forever? — the FF actually become younger than they'd been.

So why did I have them age in the first place? That goes back to the problem I mentioned at the beginning of this foreword. In 1961, when the FF debuted, Stan and Jack indicated that Reed and Ben had first met during World War II. Sue was the girl left behind. That was fine back then. Conceivably, Reed might have been only 22 years old in 1943. That would have made him 40 in 1961. And based on the way he was drawn, that was acceptable. But this was now 1979. If we accepted that Reed was 22 in '43, that would make him 58. And honestly that was too old. My plan was to tell a story that would allow us to de-age Reed and company to his physical thirties again. And that's why Johnny could not go into space with them. Nobody wanted a nine-year-old Torch hanging around.

Before I talk about *FF* #215 we have to take a look at the *FF Annual* #14. This double-sized book was written by me and illustrated by some young artist named George Pérez. Whatever happened to him?

This issue itself was actually a horror story that brought the FF to New Salem, home of the witch, Agatha Harkness. As for George's art, it's brilliant, and his double-page spread introducing us to this mystical city is staggering both in its design and complexity. It is an amazing piece of work. Especially when you realize how young George was at the time.

There's not much I can reveal about the story without giving it all away, so read it and enjoy. At least I hope you will.

Now let's return to the main book. After the huge sprawling and complex storyline of the past year, I wanted the next story to be straightforward and fun, and issues #215 and #216 fit the bill. The story started with a typical battle with Blastaar the Living Bomb-Burst, (oh boy, did Stan have a way of coming up with names you could never forget), but just as you thought you knew where it was going, it became a completely different kind of story. John and I did part one. I plotted part two and Bill Mantlo did a wonderful job dialoging it.

That was my last issue as writer of the FF. For the next month or so I worked on *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *Star Trek* but then left Mighty Marvel for other pastures. Although that was my last issue, there's more FF to come.

FF #217 was written by Bill Mantlo and illustrated by John Byrne. Although I'm listed for suggesting the plot I have to be honest; I don't remember what input I may have had, if any. The issue co-starred a new character called Dazzler who was intended to be a cross-media promotion between Marvel and a record company. The front office asked that she be put into nearly every Marvel comic that month, and so she was.

But this issue may be better known for something else. Again, since I was no longer at Marvel, I don't know for certain, but in reading the story I'm assuming the FF cartoon show had either run its course or changed its focus, since H.E.R.B.I.E. essentially commits suicide to save the FF from the villain called Doctor Sun. Obviously nobody wanted to waste another moment with the robot, so in one issue he is gone. Rest in pieces.

Bill Mantlo and John Byrne worked together again for the final story in this collection. It's a straightforward fun adventure teaming the FF up with Spider-Man to battle the Frightful Four and Electro. It's filled with great action and fun dialogue, exactly the kind of story you need before you start yet another epic.

I wrote *The Fantastic Four* for nearly two years, and in many ways I wish I could have continued longer. The FF has so many great villains I wanted to work with. I so loved the book as a young teen that I am still amazed I got a chance to direct its course, if even only for awhile.

The FF is a great template on how to do big, fun comics. Stan and Jack created a masterpiece. I'm thrilled I got the chance to play with their characters and hope you enjoyed the results.

Marv Wolfman
March 2, 2017

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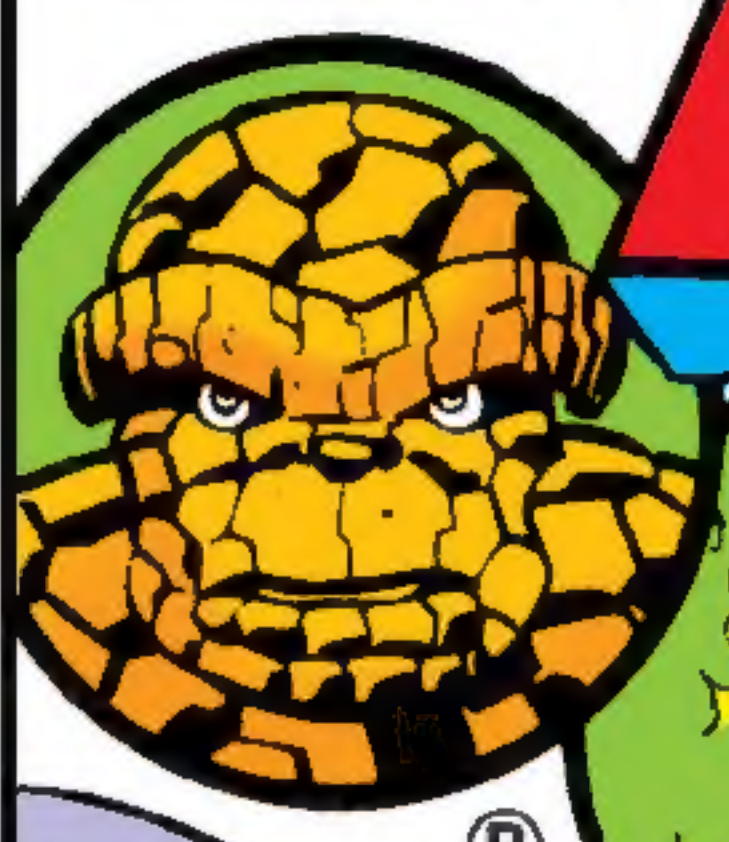
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DIE, YOU
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THE SKRULLS SHALL
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CON. ED.



WE KNOW QUASIMODO SIPHONED OUR COMPUTER POWER BEFORE HIJACKING OUR MISSILE...*

AND THE LAST WE SAW HE TOOK OFF INTO SPACE WITH IT.

*FANTASTIC FOUR #202--M.W.

HE HAS WHAT HE CAME FOR-- WHY WOULD HE CONTINUE TO DRAIN OUR COMPUTER BANKS?

FURTHERMORE, HOW IS HE DOING IT? MY SONIC-RADAR TRACE DOESN'T INDICATE HIM ANYWHERE CLOSE ENOUGH TO AFFECT US.

AWRIGHT, BRAT, THAT'S IT FER TODAY.

I GOT ME A DATE WITH ALICIA LATER, AN' YA DON'T WANT ME TA GET TOO TUCKERED OUT TA SMOOCH, DO YA?

YOU GUYS HAVE ALL THE FUN... I'M TAKING OFF FOR AWHILE. DON'T MISS ME.

LOVE AN' KISSES, TO YOU, TOO, BLUE-EYES!

MISS WHO? WE AWREADY FERGOT YA, HALF-PINT!

FLAME ON!

REED AND SUE HAVE A COMPLETE LIFE... EVEN BEN AND ALICIA...

I'M THE ONLY UNFULFILLED ONE IN THE GROUP.

WELL, THAT'S GONNA CHANGE-- AS OF RIGHT NOW!

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE BAXTER BUILDING...

SUSAN?

AGATHA HARKNESS! I DIDN'T HEAR YOU ENTER!

IT'S TIME FOR FRANKLIN'S LESSONS... I WILL TAKE HIM NOW.

SEEYA LATER, SQUIRT.

LET US GO, CHILD.

REED, CAN WE TALK? I'M WORRIED WE AREN'T SPENDING ENOUGH TIME WITH FRANKLIN...

IT'S NOT HEALTHY...

INCREDIBLE! LOOK, SUE, THERE'S AN ION TRACE LEADING BEYOND THE MILKY WAY!

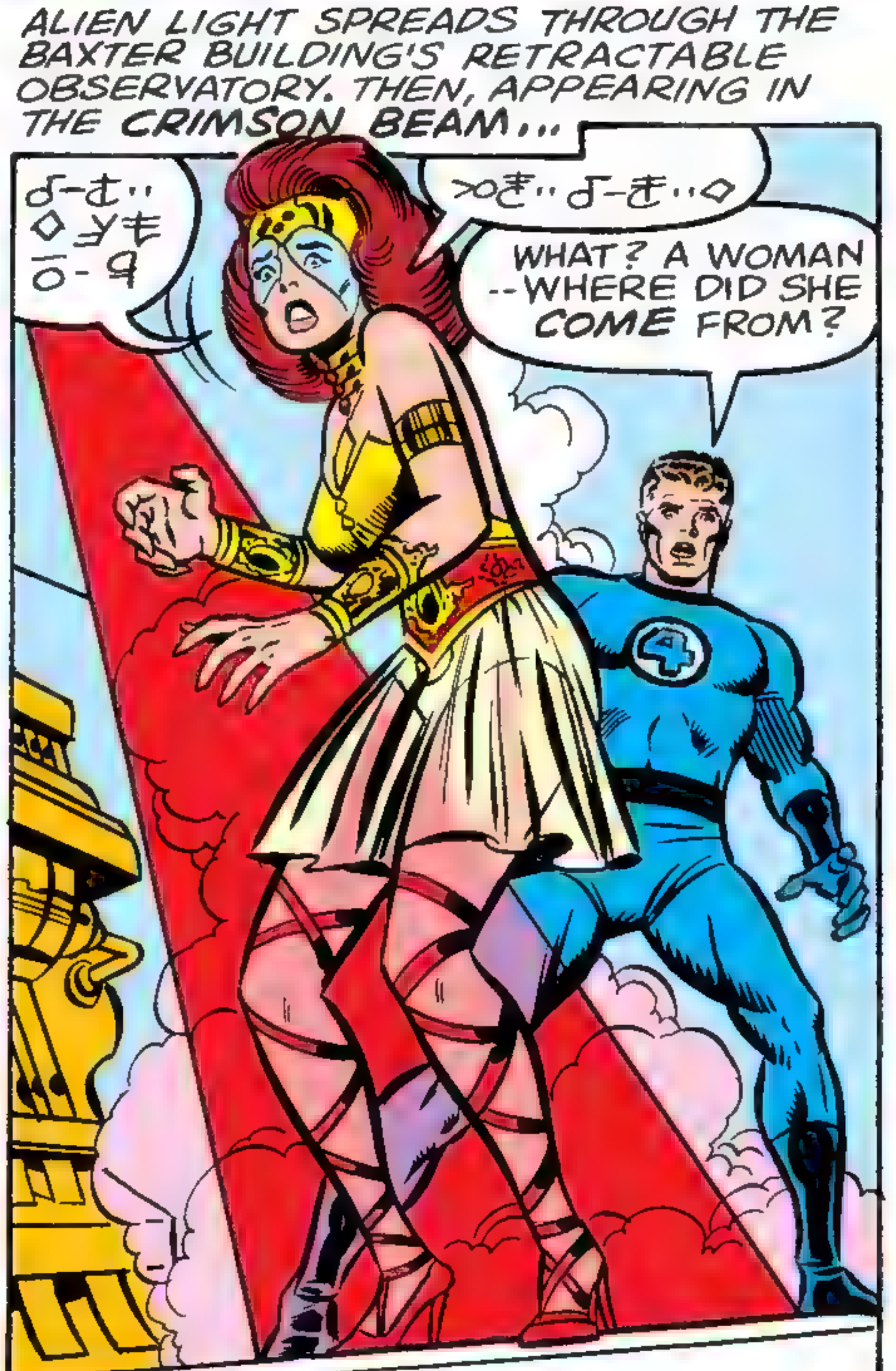
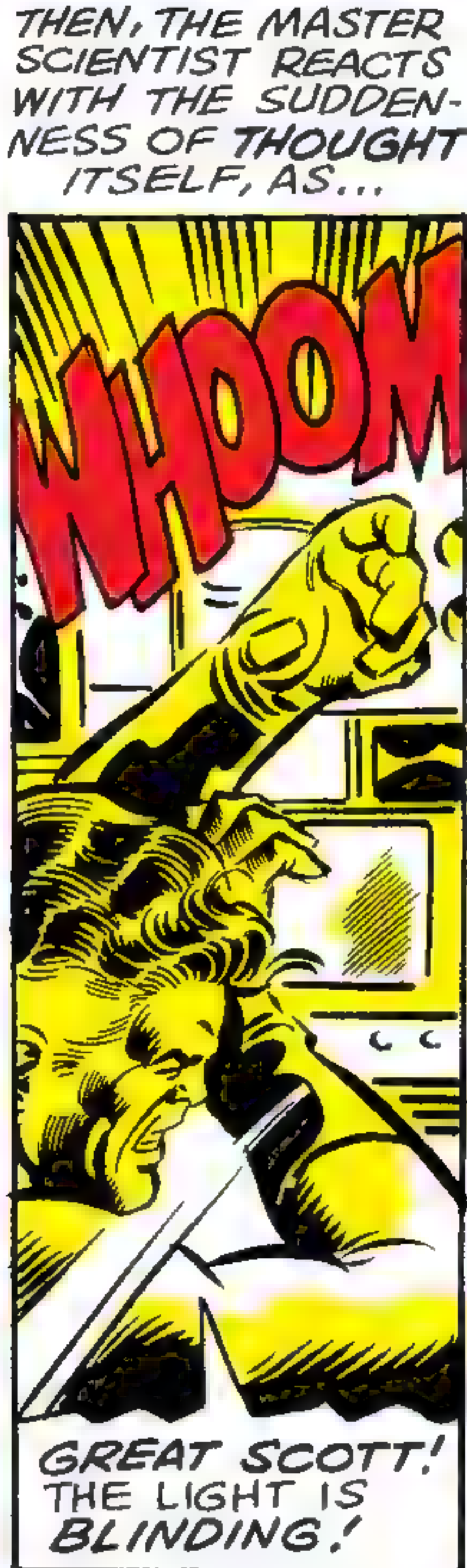
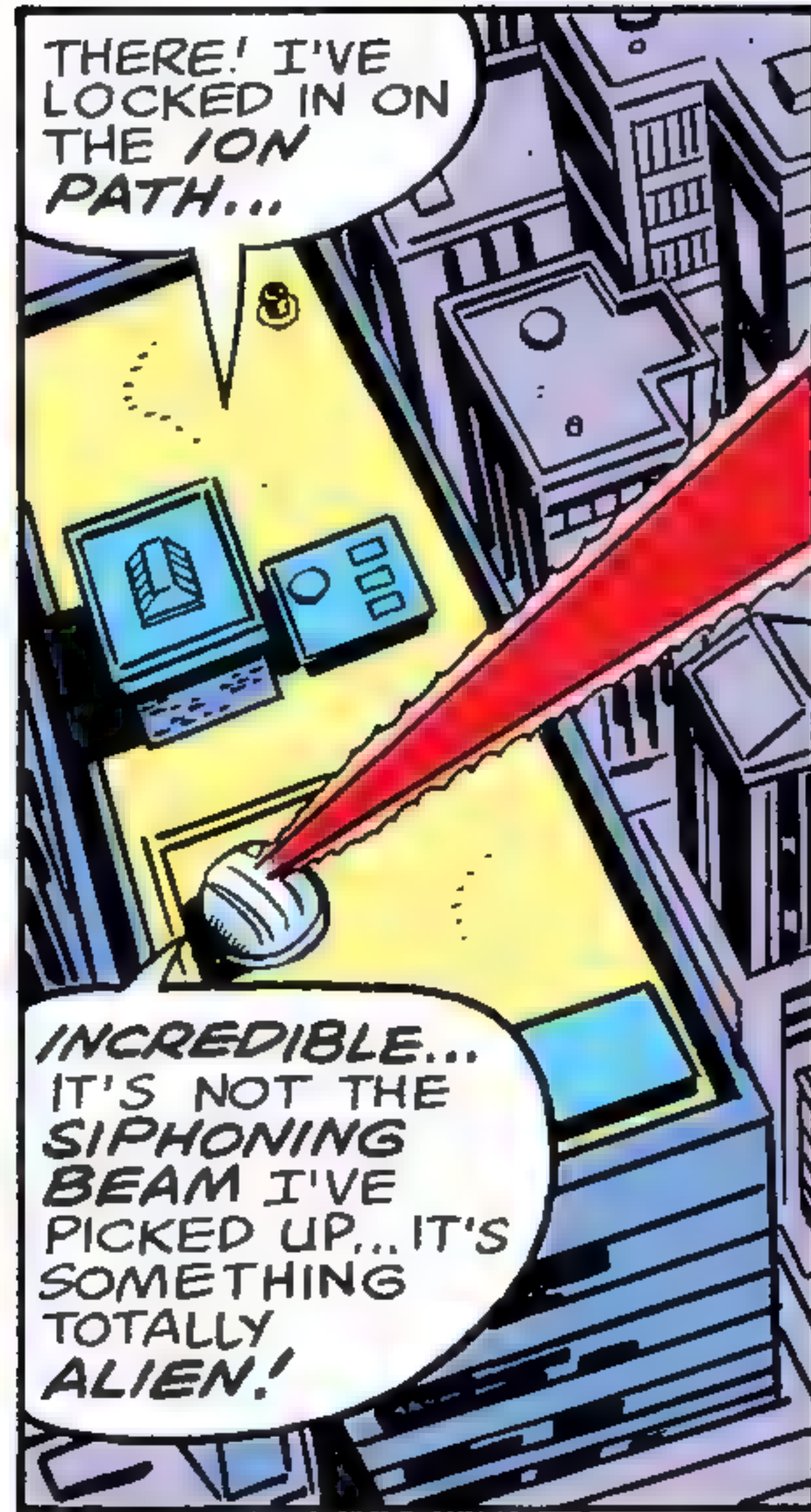
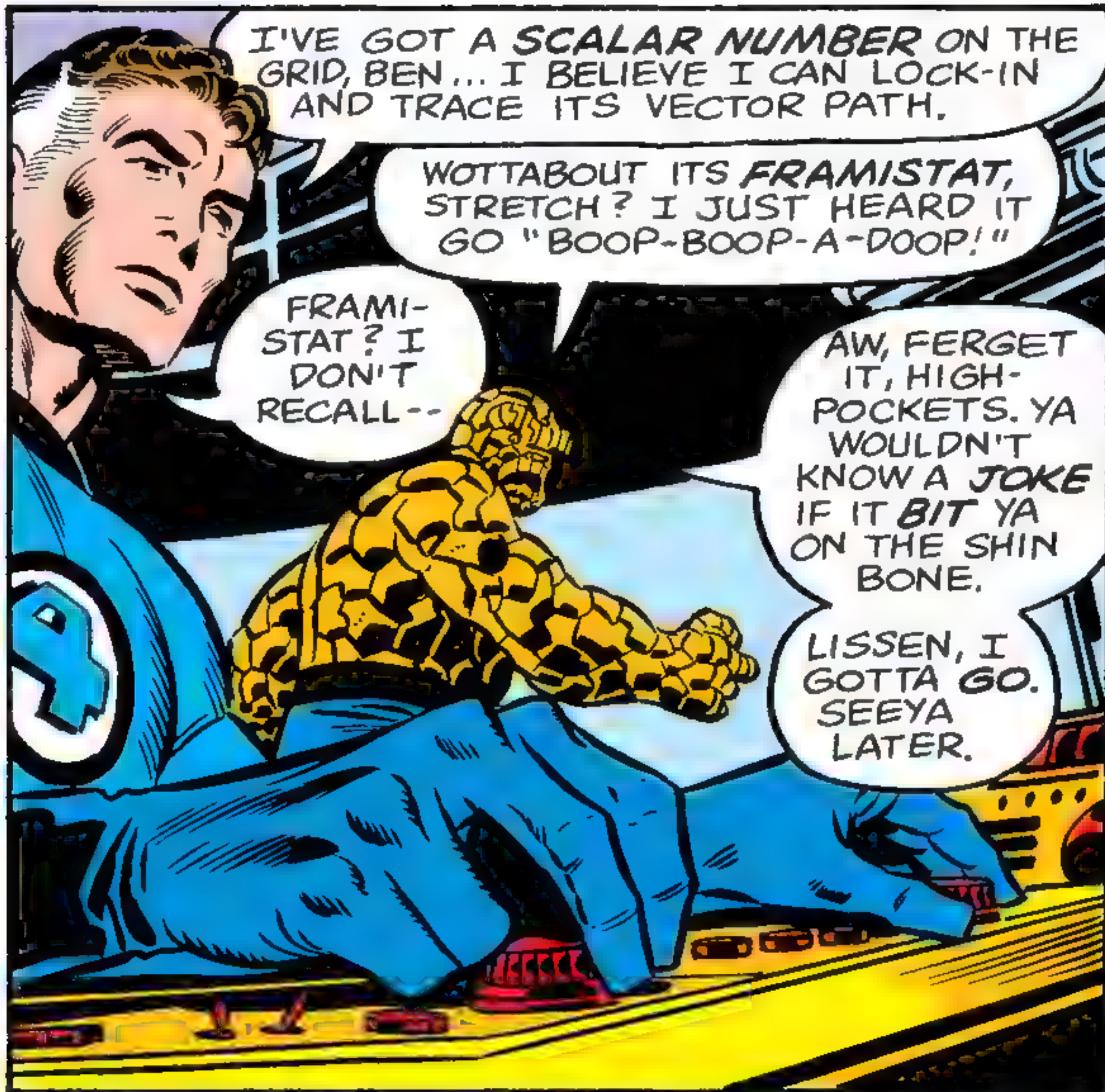
BYE, UNCA BEN.

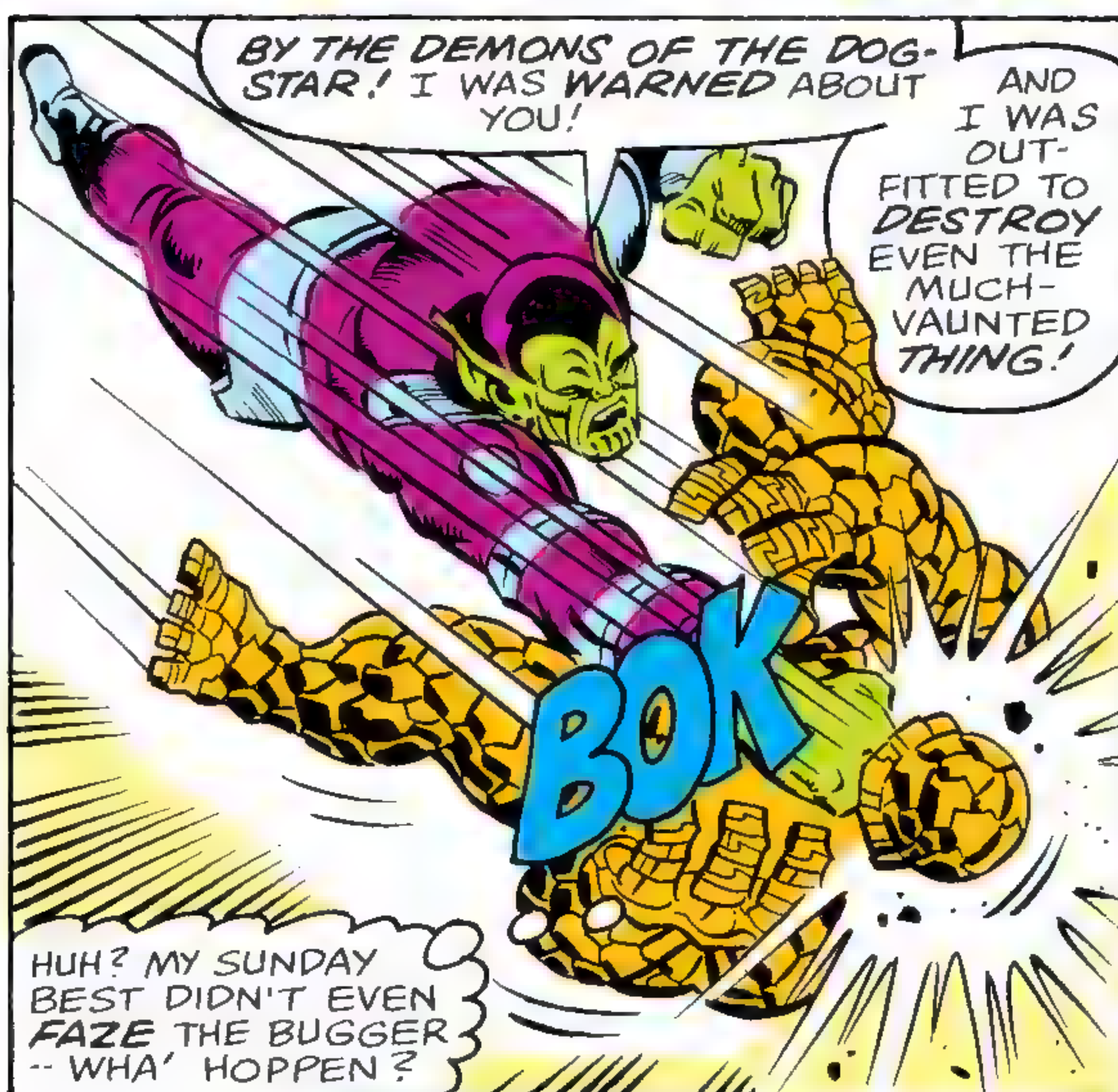
I'VE GOT TO LEARN ITS ORIGIN-POINT... IT MAY TELL US WHO IS SIPHONING OUR POWER... AND WHY!

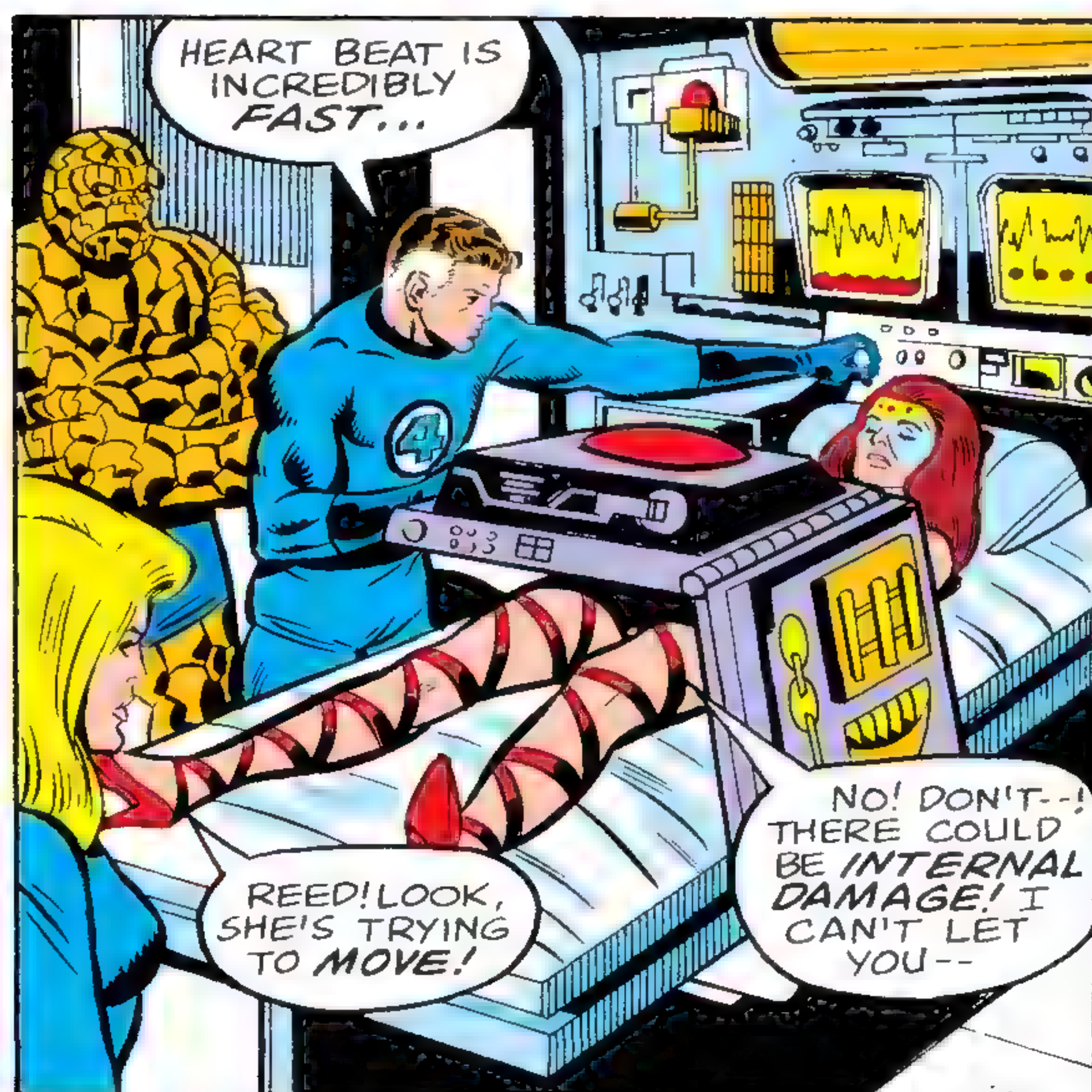
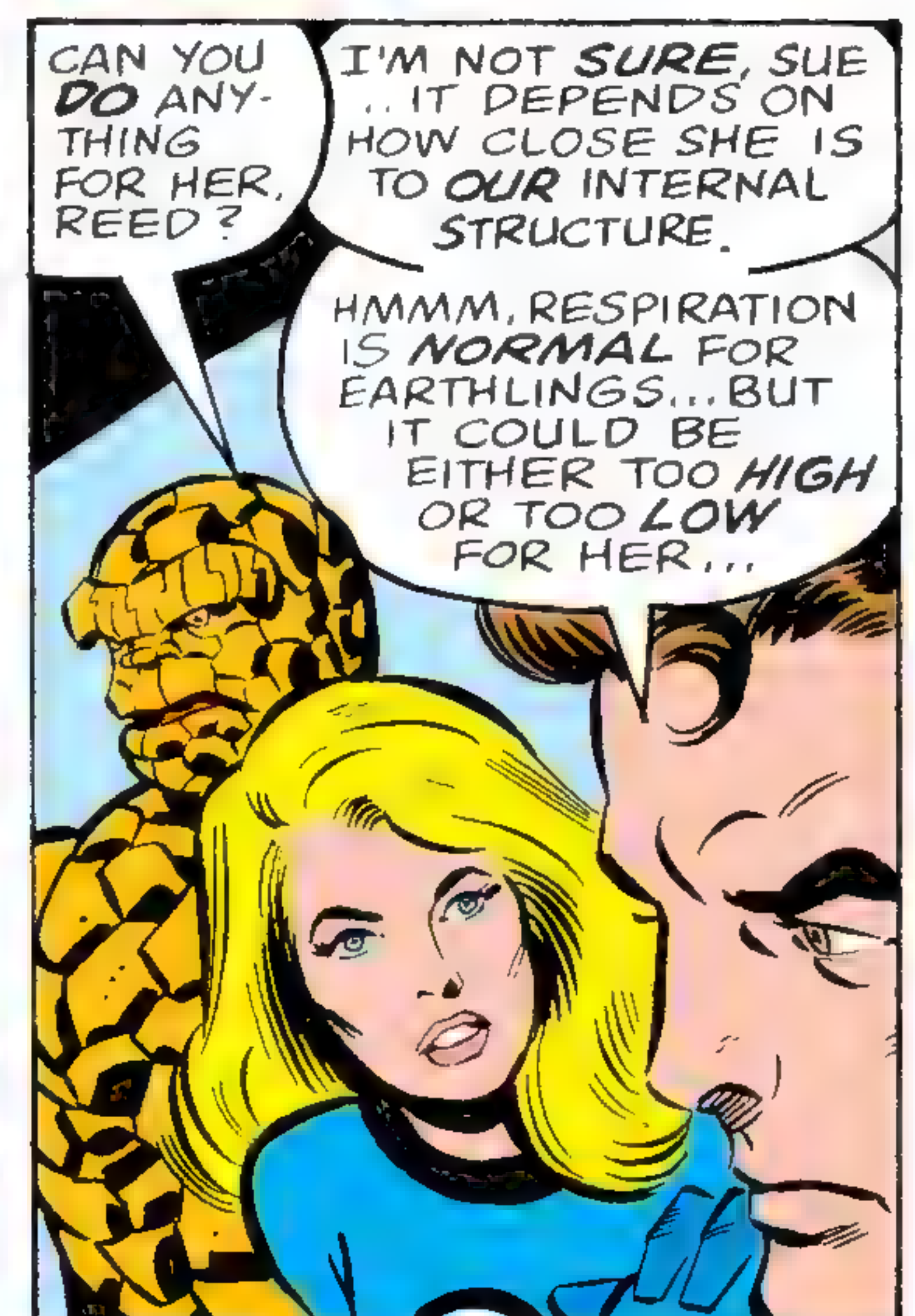
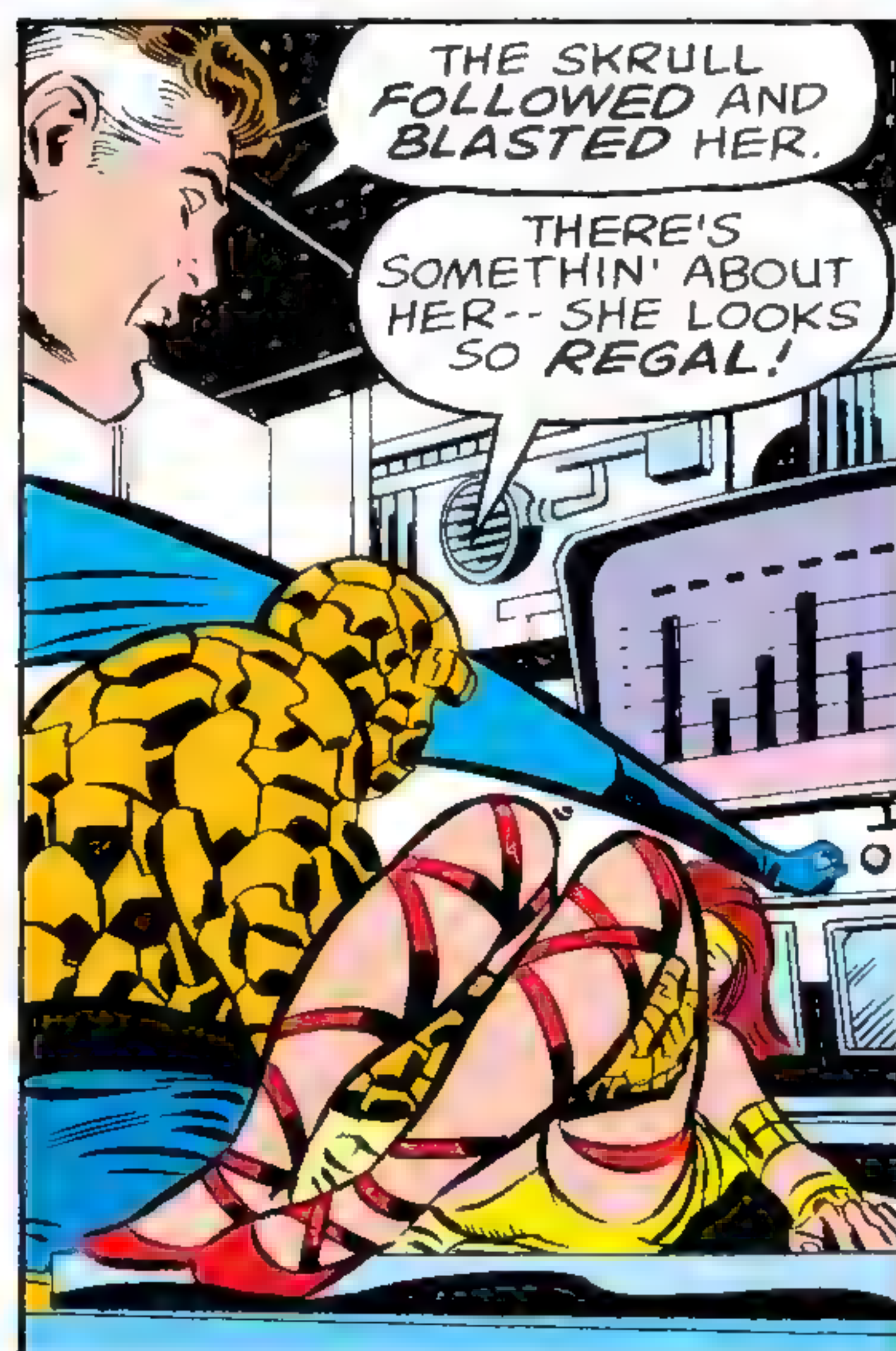
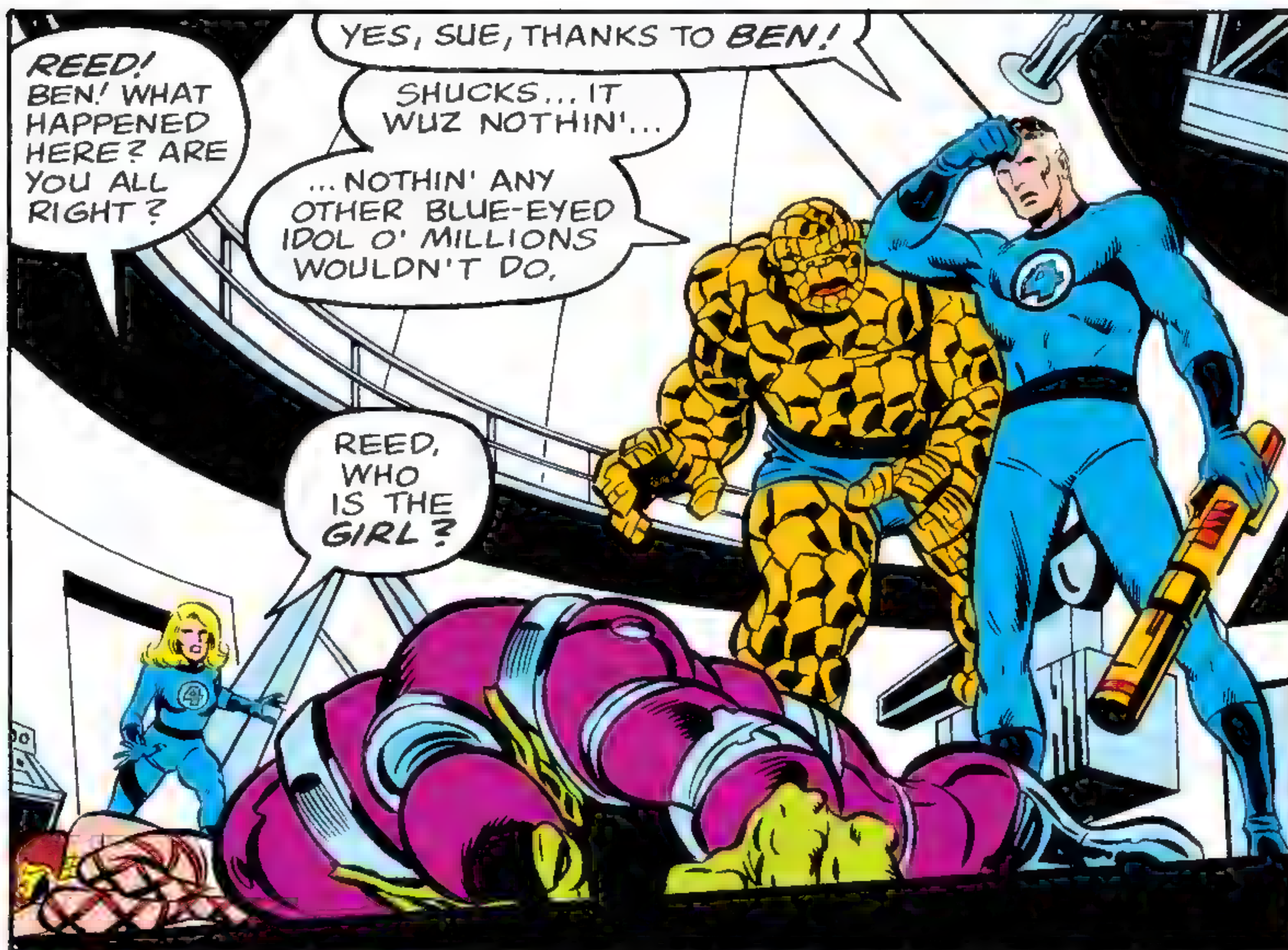
MY HUSBAND IS TOTALLY HOPELESS! HIS MIND IS IN THE CLOUDS! HE DIDN'T HEAR A WORD I SAID!

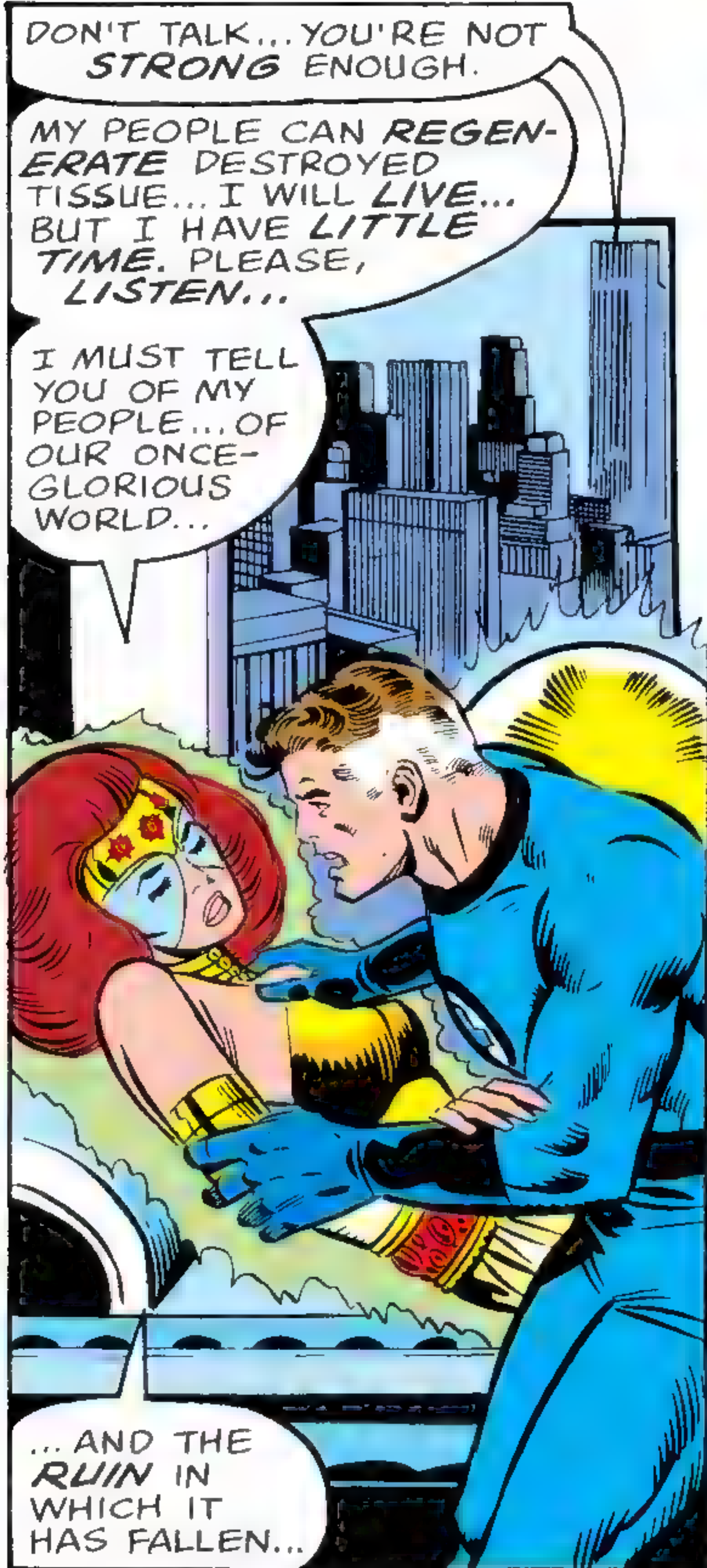
I'VE BEEN SAYIN' THAT FER YEARS, SUSIE!

BEN, COME OVER HERE, PLEASE.







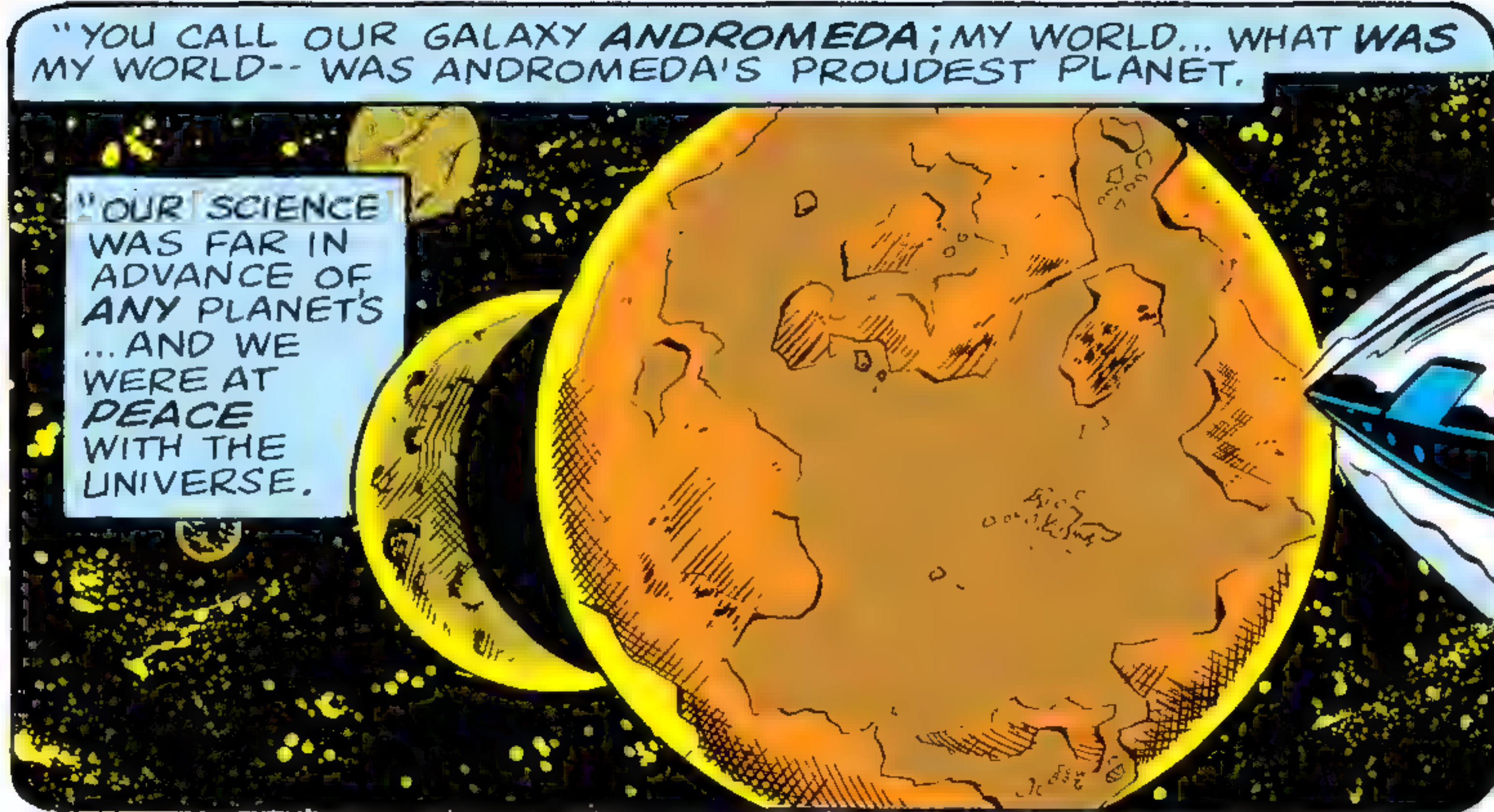


DON'T TALK... YOU'RE NOT **STRONG** ENOUGH.

MY PEOPLE CAN **REGENERATE** DESTROYED TISSUE... I WILL **LIVE**... BUT I HAVE **LITTLE TIME**. PLEASE, **LISTEN**...

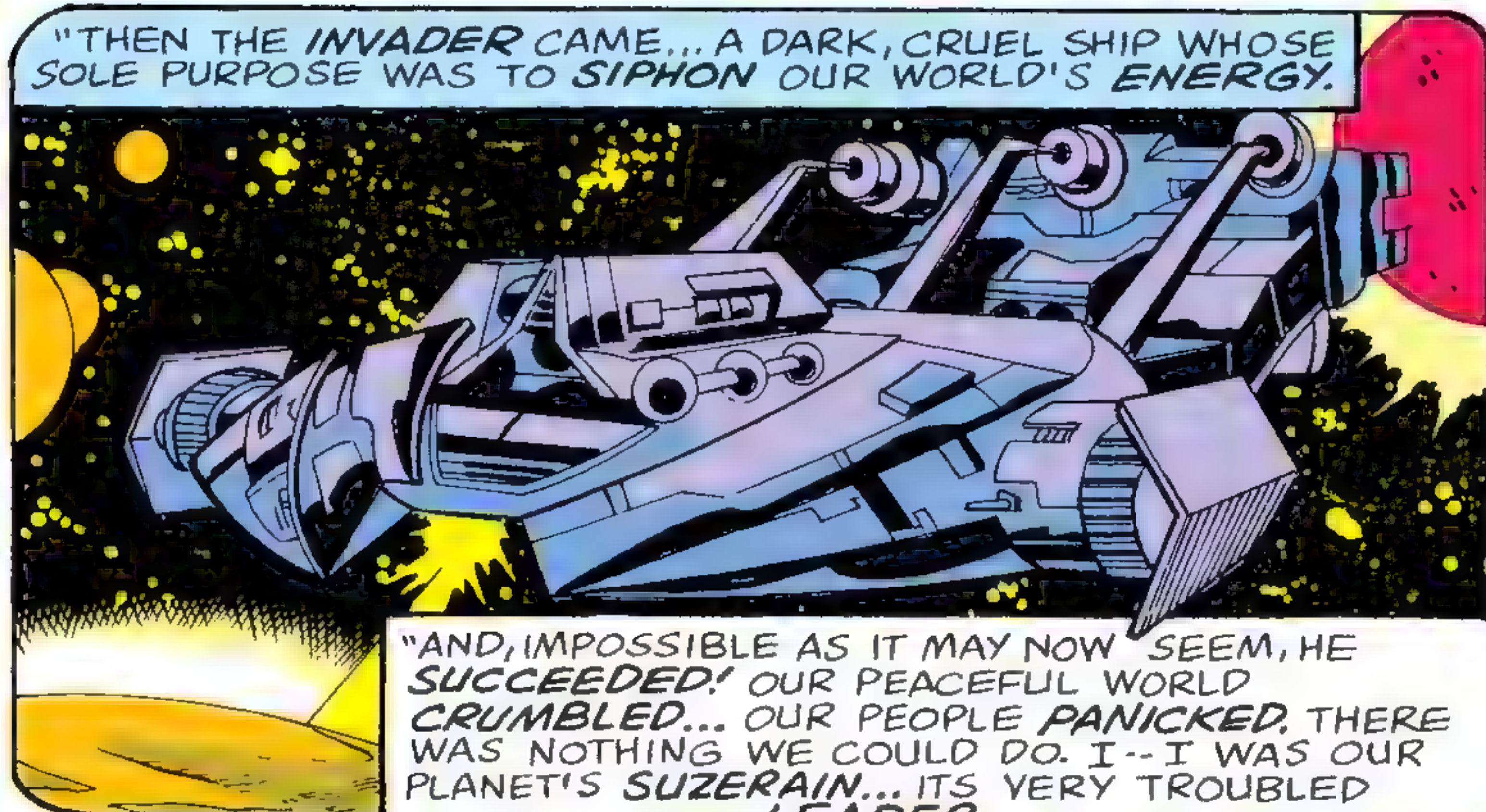
I MUST TELL YOU OF MY PEOPLE... OF OUR ONCE-**GLORIOUS** WORLD...

... AND THE **RUIN** IN WHICH IT HAS **FALLEN**...



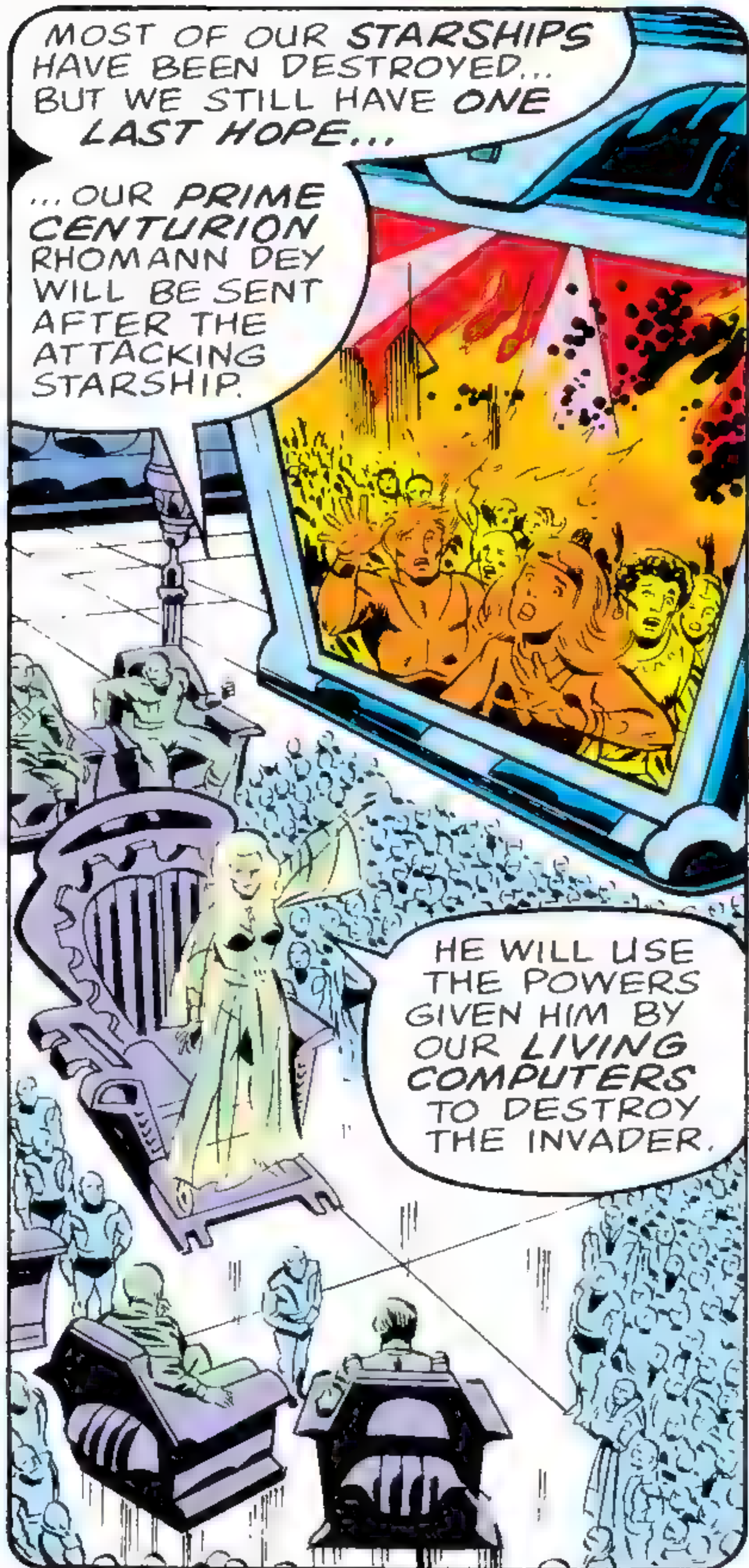
"YOU CALL OUR GALAXY **ANDROMEDA**; MY WORLD... WHAT WAS MY WORLD-- WAS **ANDROMEDA'S** PROUDEST PLANET.

"OUR SCIENCE WAS FAR IN ADVANCE OF ANY PLANET'S ... AND WE WERE AT **PEACE** WITH THE UNIVERSE.



"THEN THE **INVADER** CAME... A DARK, CRUEL SHIP WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE WAS TO **SIPHON** OUR WORLD'S **ENERGY**.

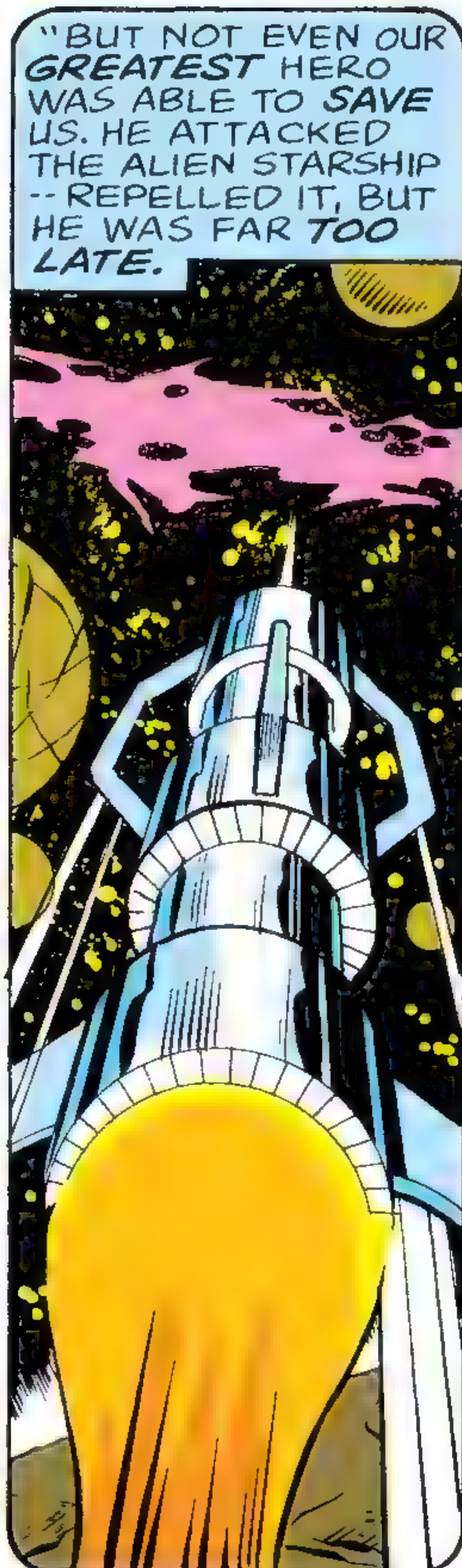
"AND, IMPOSSIBLE AS IT MAY NOW SEEM, HE **SUCCEEDED!** OUR PEACEFUL WORLD **CRUMBL**ED... OUR PEOPLE **PANICKED**. THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO. I-- I WAS OUR PLANET'S **SUZERAIN**... ITS VERY TROUBLED **LEADER**...



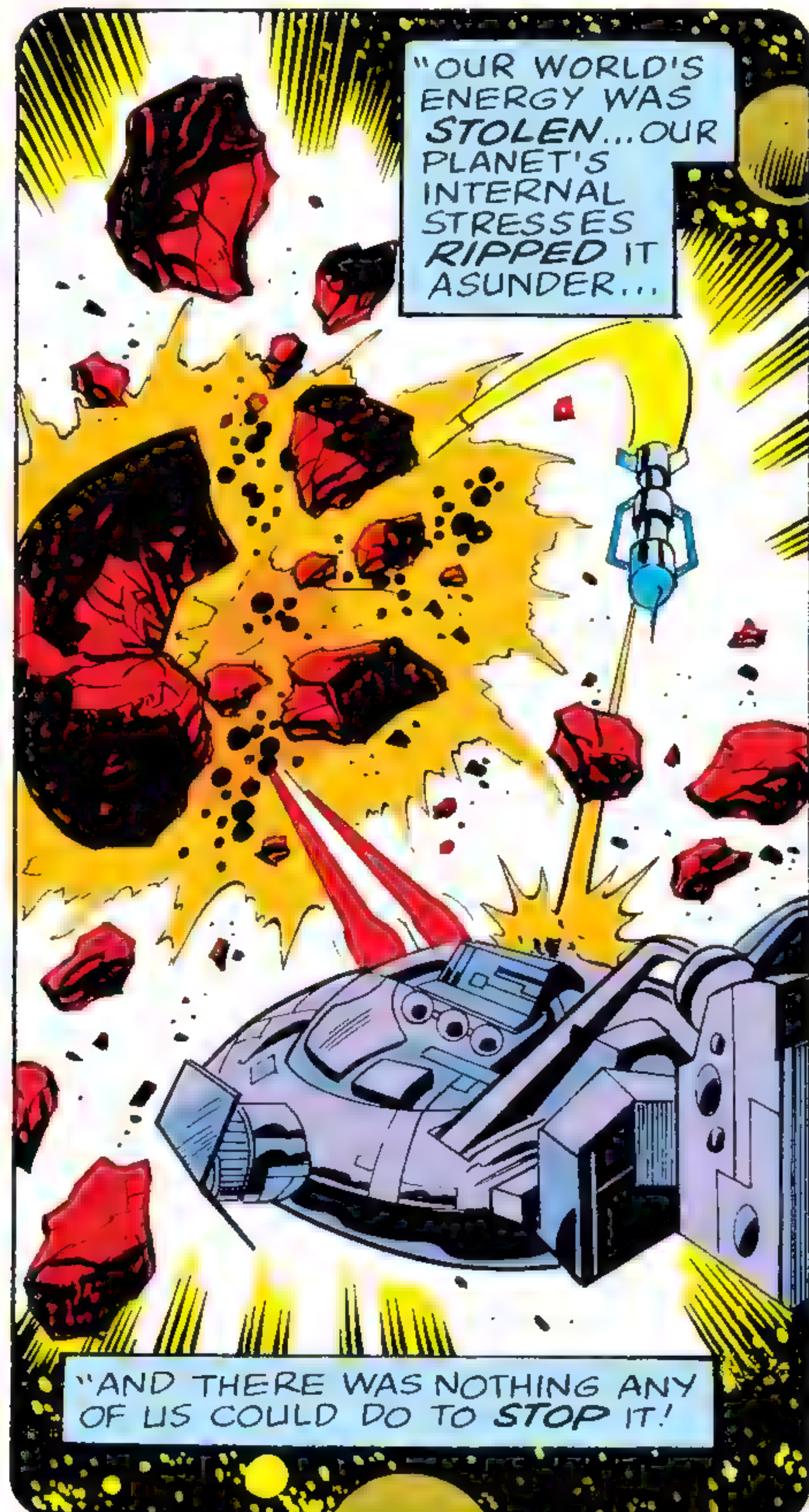
MOST OF OUR **STARSHIPS** HAVE BEEN DESTROYED... BUT WE STILL HAVE ONE **LAST HOPE**...

... OUR **PRIME CENTURION** RHOMANN DEY WILL BE SENT AFTER THE ATTACKING STARSHIP.

HE WILL USE THE POWERS GIVEN HIM BY OUR **LIVING COMPUTERS** TO DESTROY THE **INVADER**.



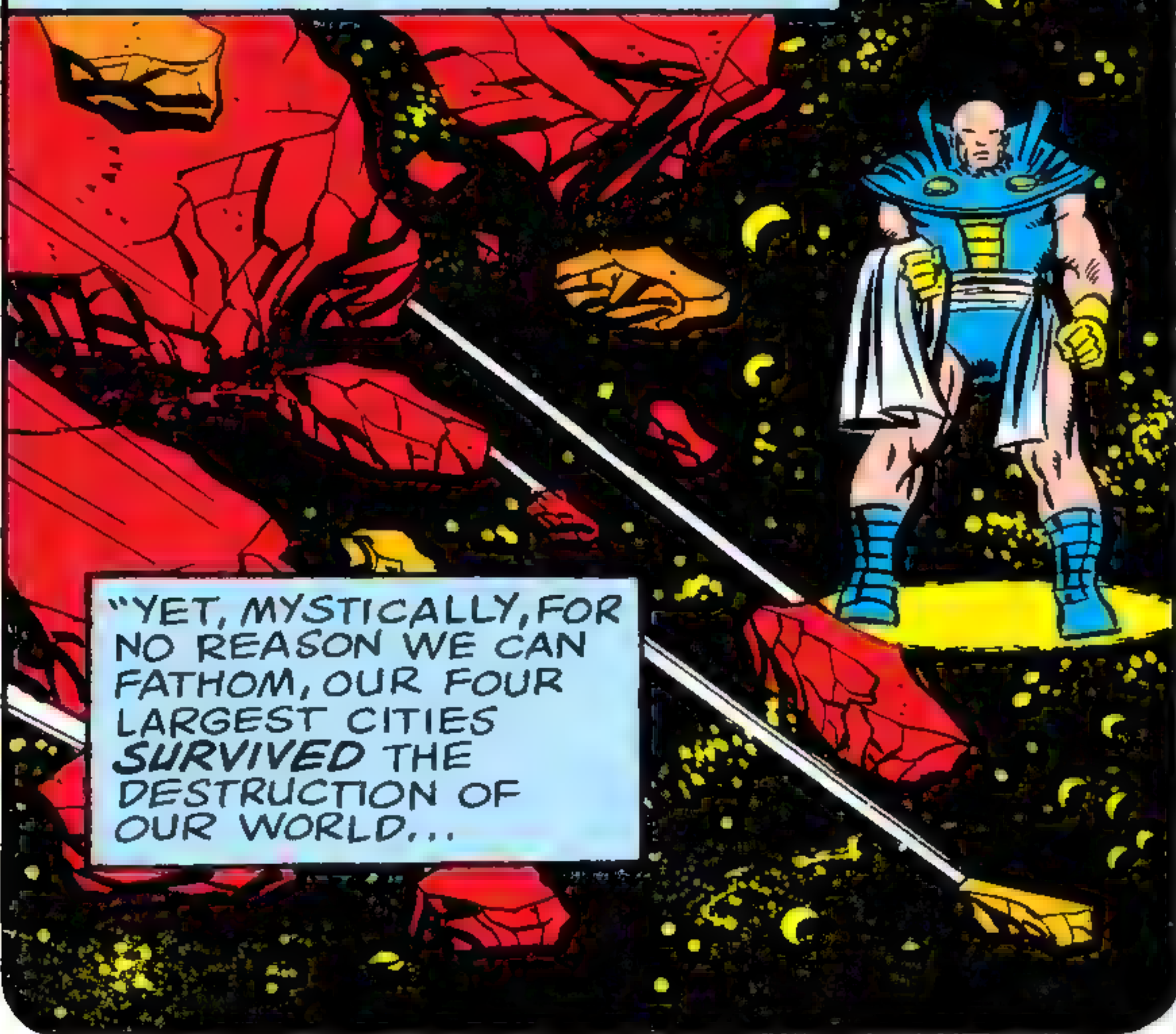
"BUT NOT EVEN OUR **GREATEST** HERO WAS ABLE TO **SAVE** US. HE ATTACKED THE ALIEN STARSHIP -- REPELLED IT, BUT HE WAS FAR TOO **LATE**.



"OUR WORLD'S **ENERGY** WAS **STOLEN**... OUR PLANET'S **INTERNAL STRESSES** **RIPPED** IT ASUNDER...

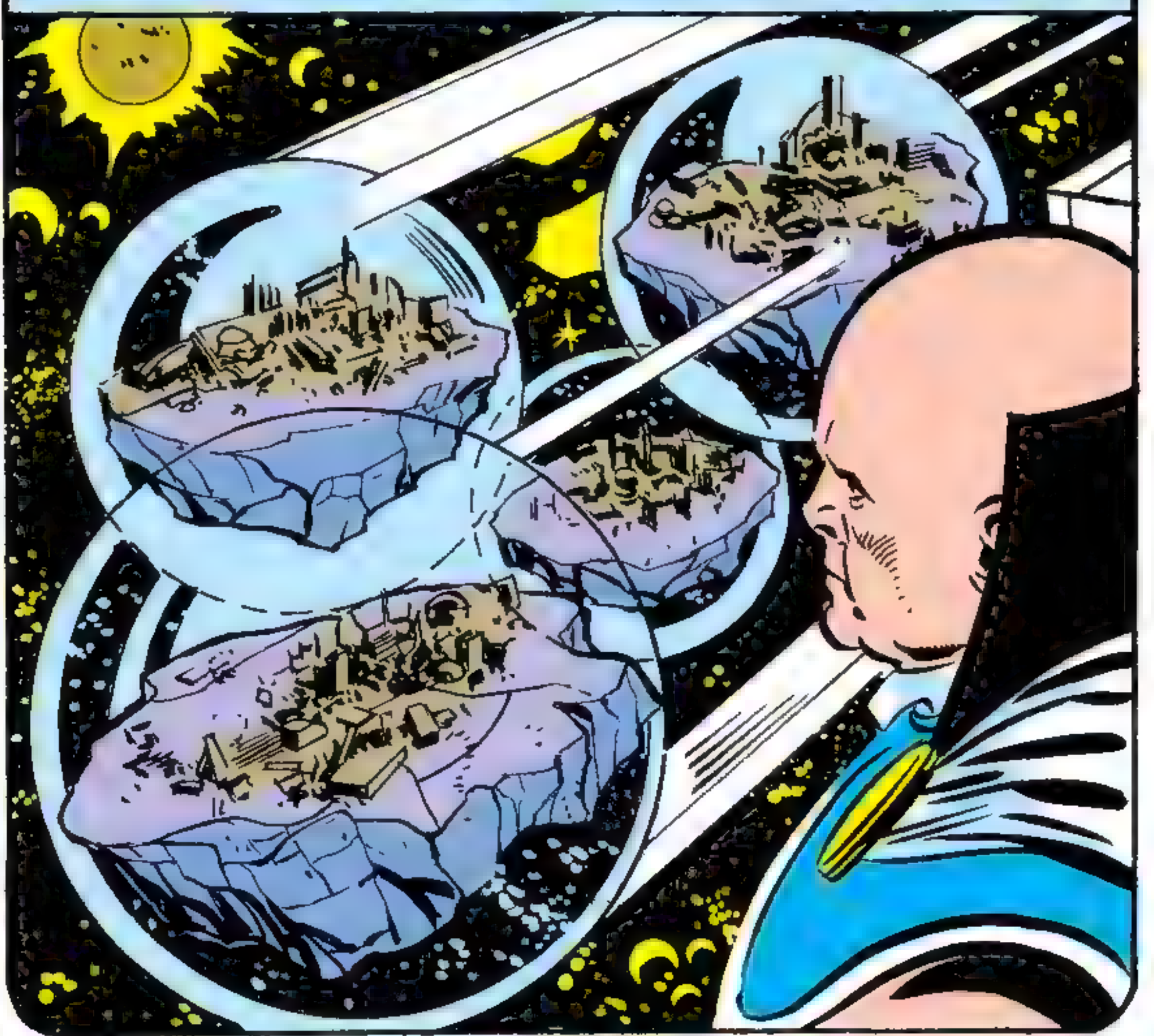
"AND THERE WAS NOTHING ANY OF US COULD DO TO **STOP** IT!

"THE REMNANTS OF OUR WORLD WERE FLUNG THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY, CELESTIAL FLOTSAM SET ADRIFT IN AN ENDLESS SEA.

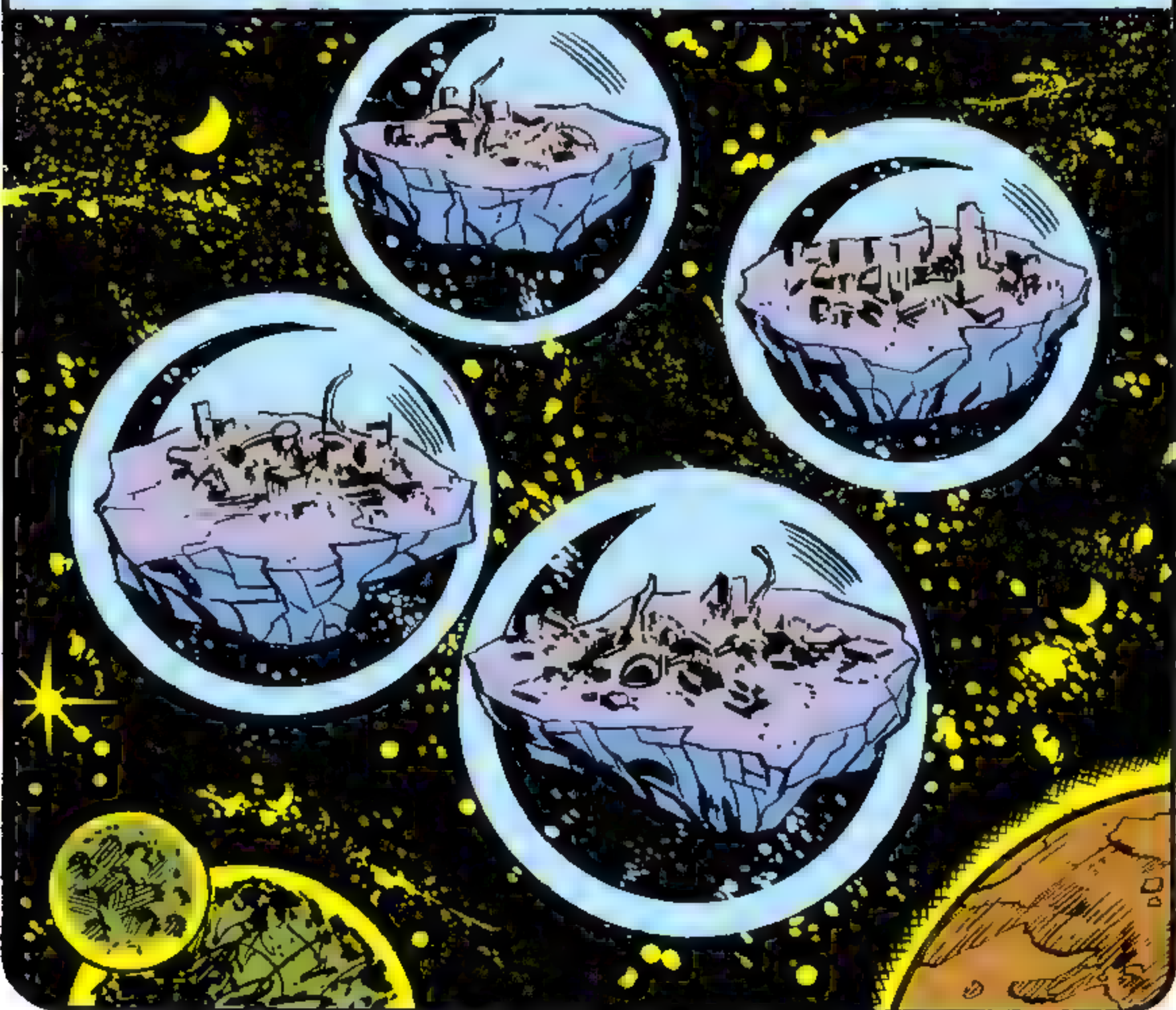


"YET, MYSTICALLY, FOR NO REASON WE CAN FATHOM, OUR FOUR LARGEST CITIES SURVIVED THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR WORLD...

"...MYSTERIOUSLY SURROUNDED BY FIELDS OF FORCE WHICH KEPT OUR ATMOSPHERE INTACT.



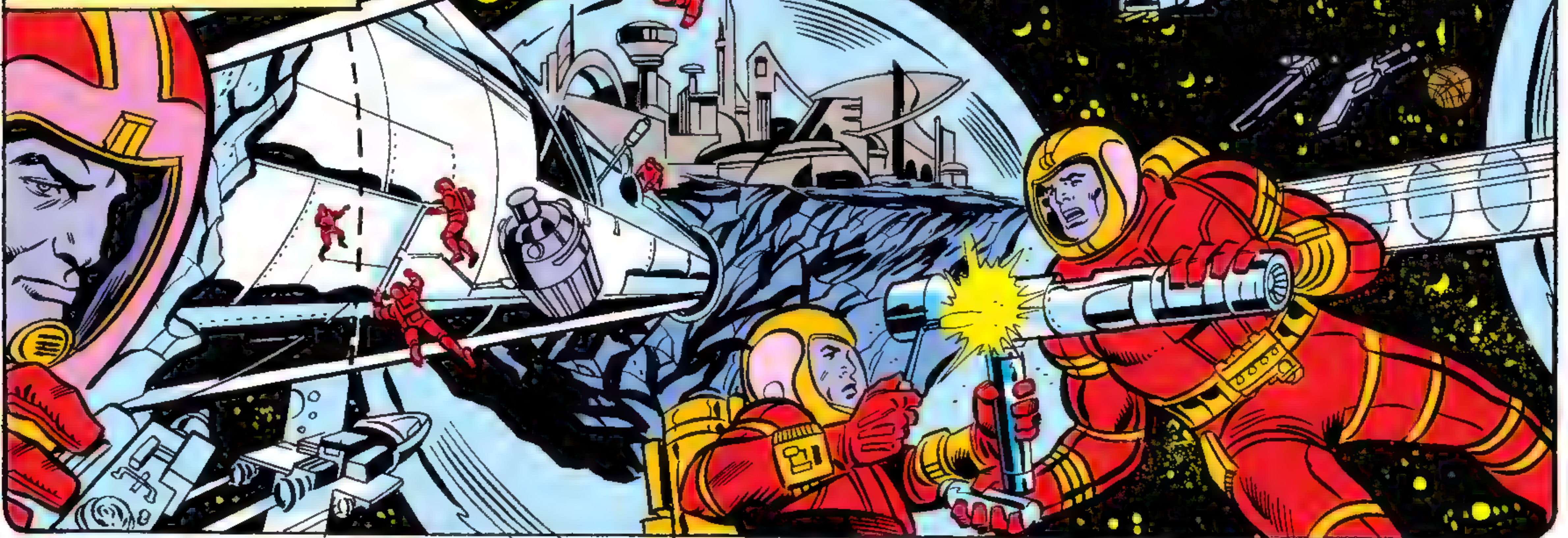
"PERHAPS WE SHOULD HAVE QUESTIONED OUR GOOD FORTUNE, BUT WE WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH SURVIVAL. AND, TO SURVIVE...



"...WE HAD TO REGROUP OUR PEOPLE... WE HAD TO RENEW OUR COURAGE, WE NEEDED A GOAL... AND OUR GOAL WAS CONTINUED SURVIVAL.

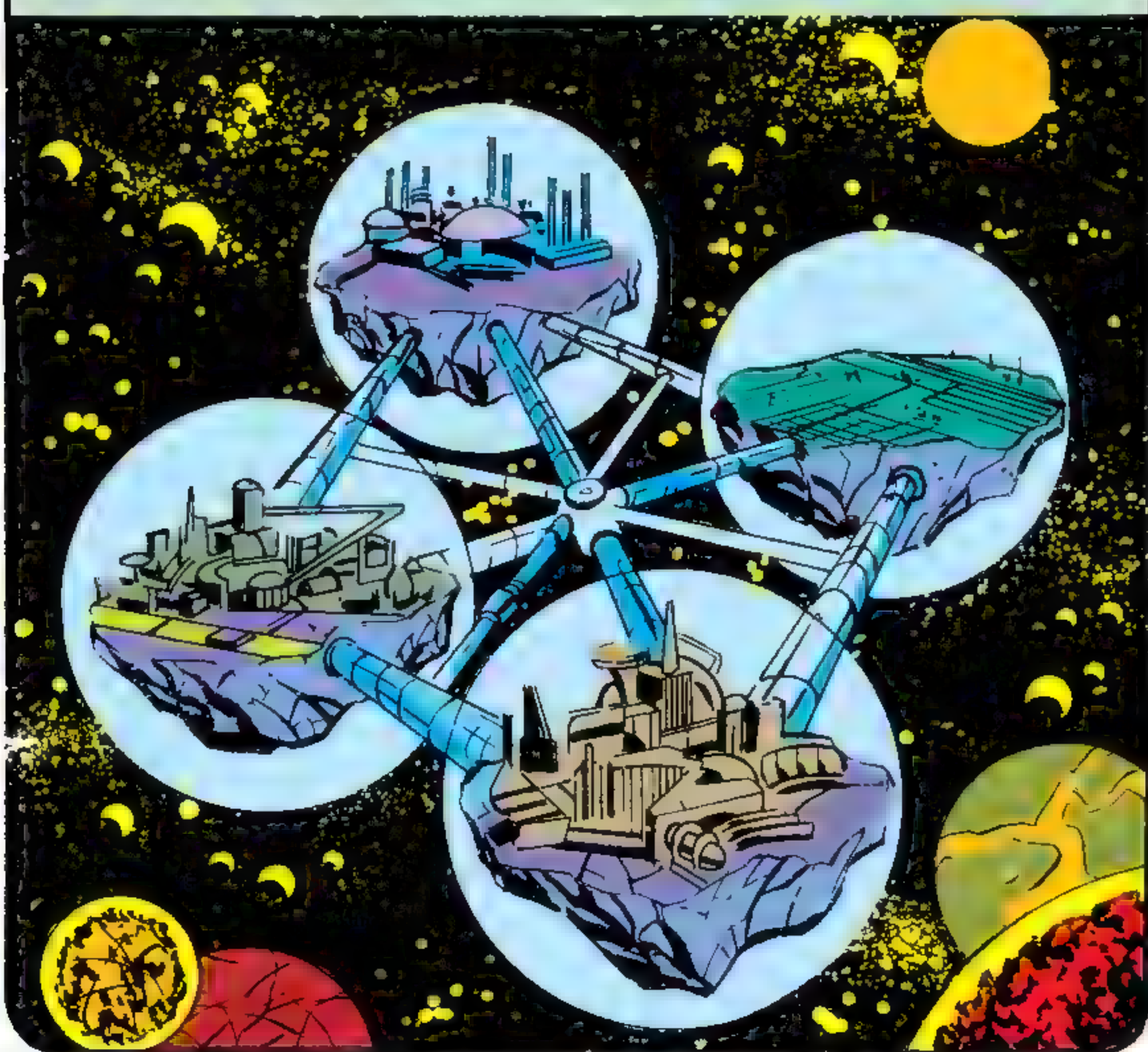


"WE QUICKLY LEARNED THAT THE FORCE-FIELDS WHICH KEPT US ALIVE COULD BE PENETRATED-- AND SO WE CONSTRUCTED MASSIVE TUNNELS AND THOROUGHFARES BETWEEN OUR FOUR FLOATING CITIES.

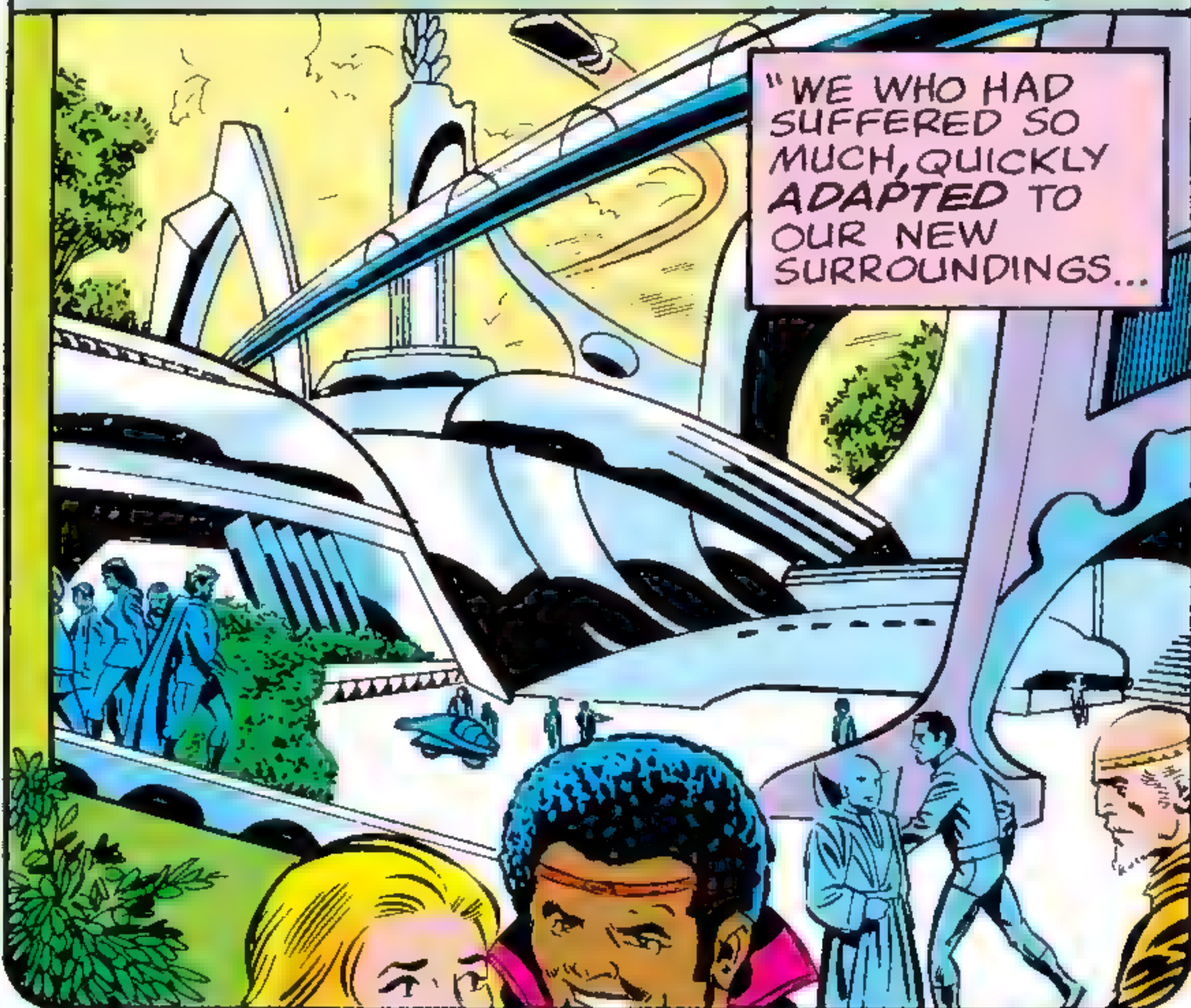


"IT TOOK TWO OF YOUR YEARS FOR THE PROJECT TO BE COMPLETED--

"--BUT WHEN IT WAS DONE, WE HAD CONSTRUCTED THE MOST *IDEAL* WORLD OF ALL.

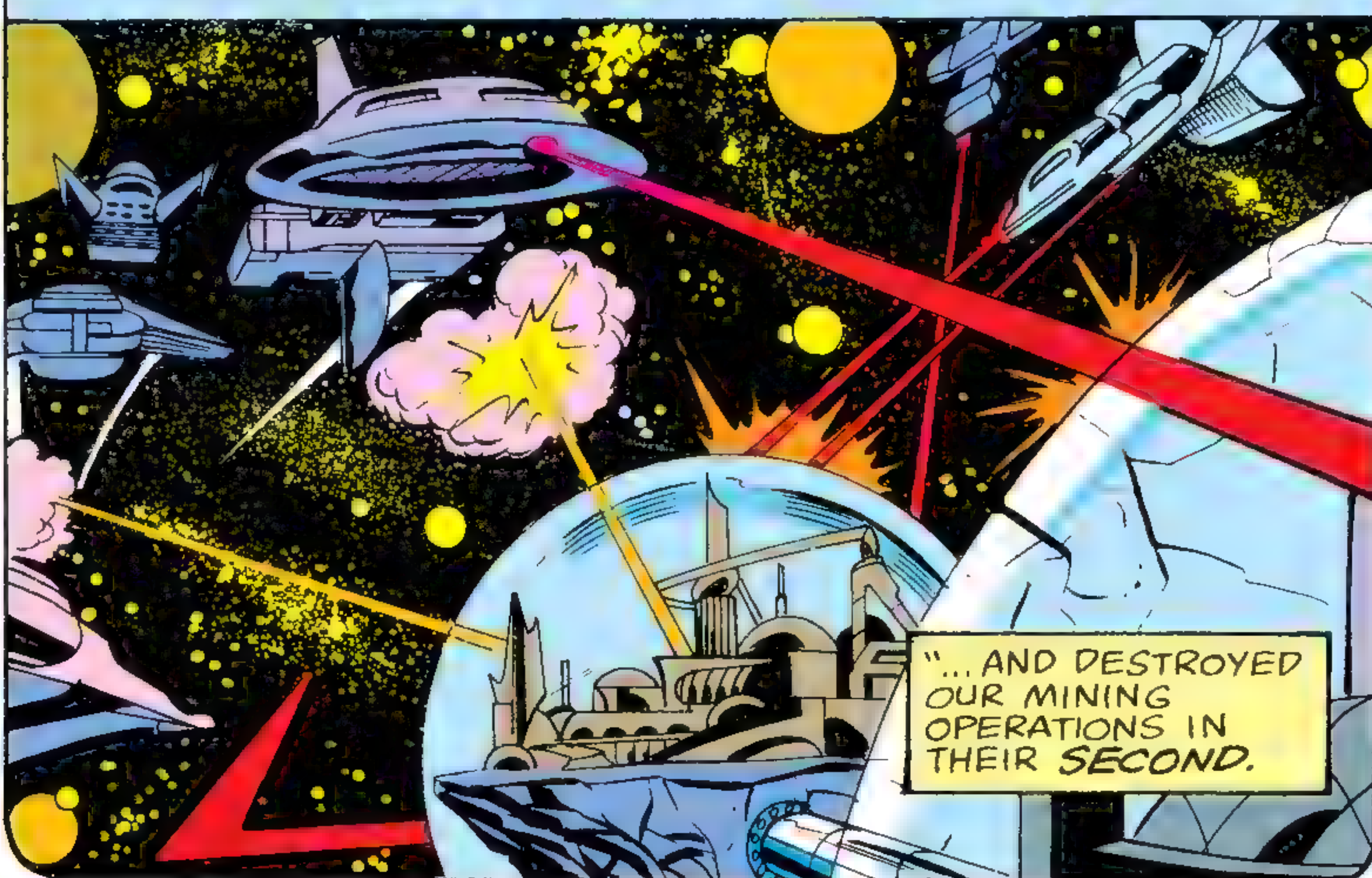


"UPON ONE ASTEROID WE ERECTED OUR CITIES, ON ANOTHER OUR MINING COLONIES. A THIRD WAS USED FOR *FARMING*, AND THE FINAL ASTEROID WAS CONVERTED INTO *Factories*.



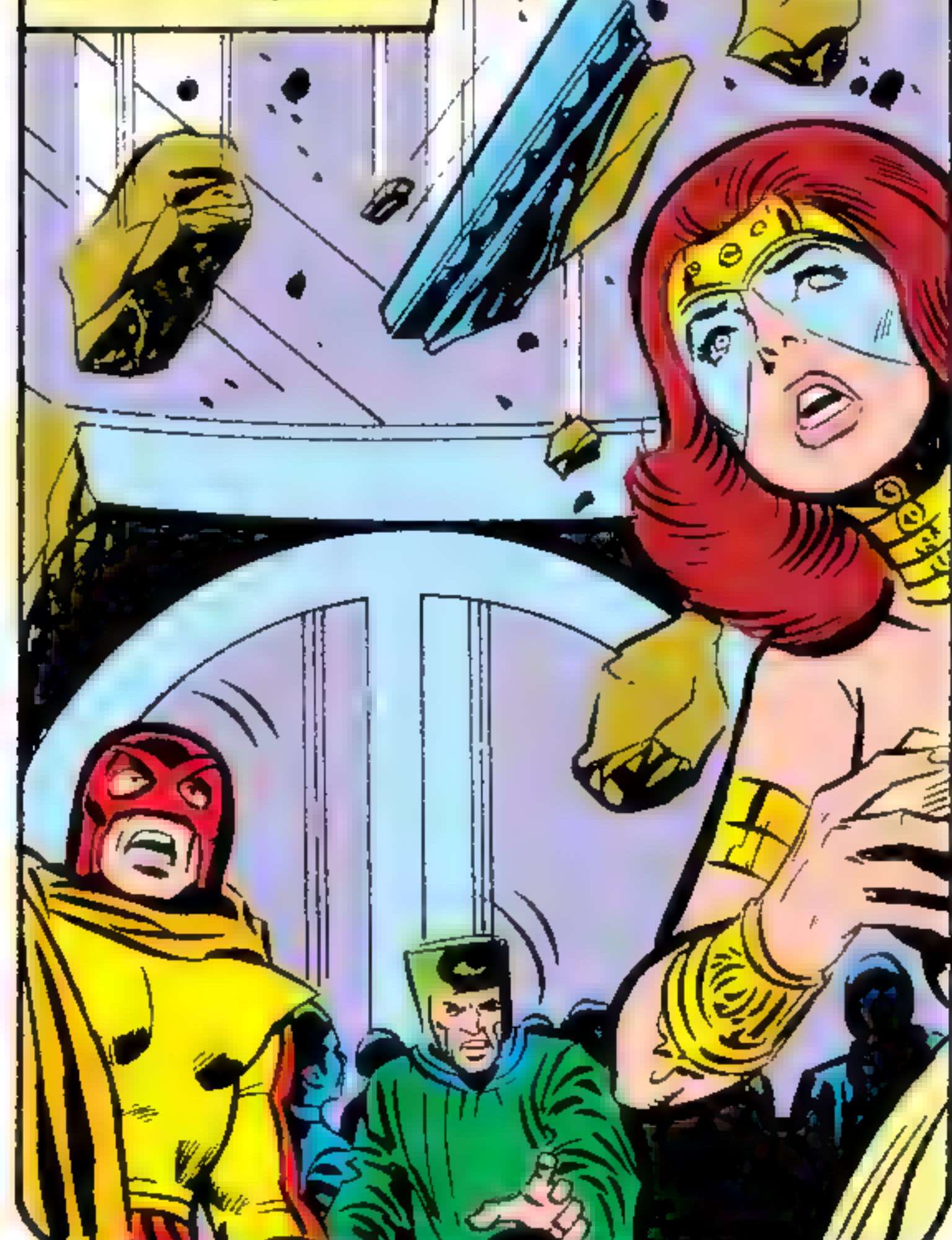
"WE WHO HAD SUFFERED SO MUCH, QUICKLY ADAPTED TO OUR NEW SURROUNDINGS..."

"...UNTIL THE *NEW INVADERS* CAME AND SENSED OUR WEAKNESS. THEIR TERRIBLE WARSHIPS RIPPED THROUGH OUR FORCE-FIELDS. THEY *LEVELLED* OUR FACTORIES IN THE FIRST SWEEP..."



"...AND DESTROYED OUR MINING OPERATIONS IN THEIR *SECOND*."

"WHEN THEY ATTACKED OUR *HOMES*, THE COUNCIL CONVENED..."

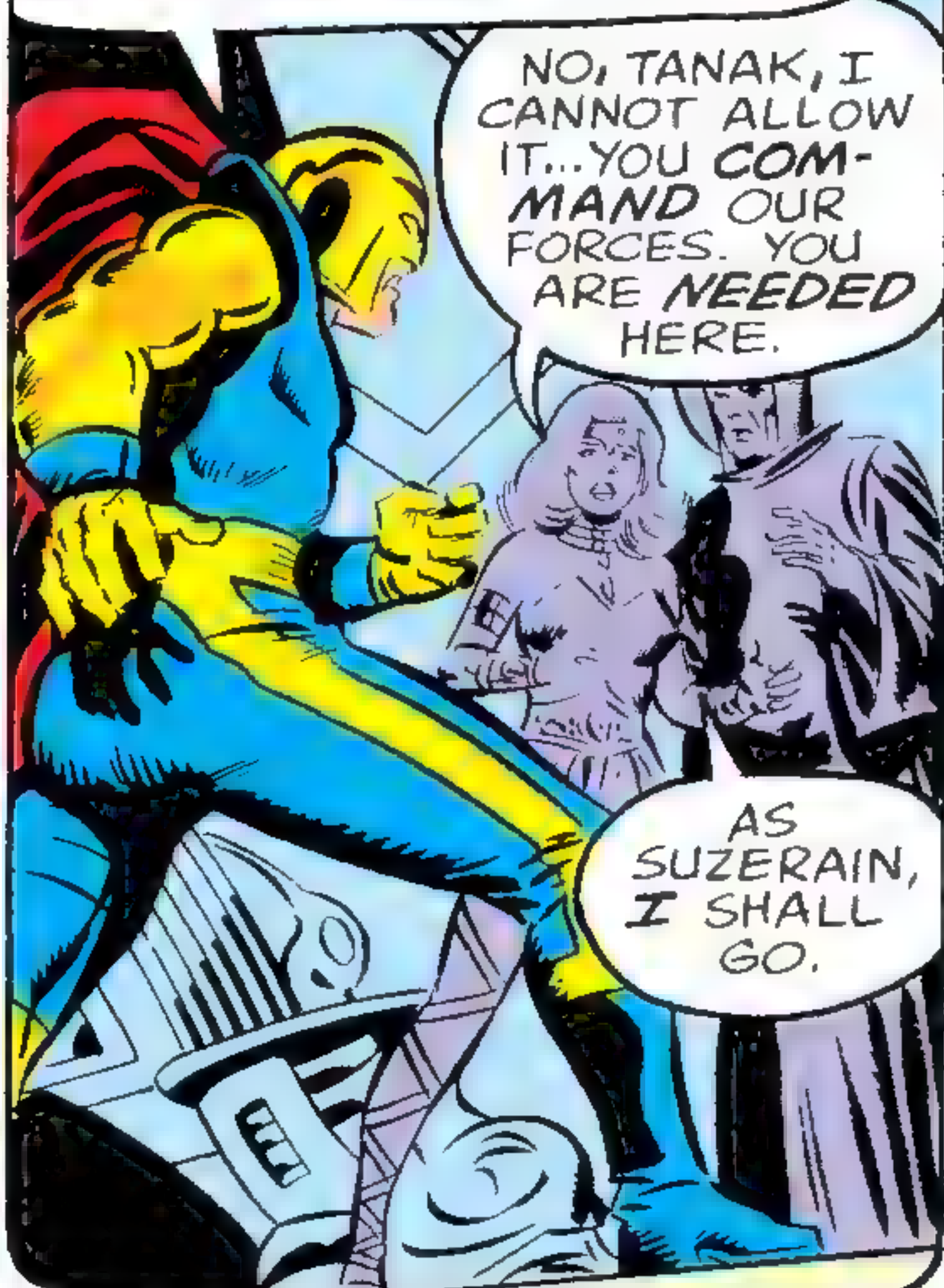


THERE IS A *CHANCE*, QUEEN ADORA. I HAVE DISCOVERED AN *ION LIGHT*... IT ORIGINATES FROM ANOTHER WORLD.

I CAN *ALTER* THE BEAM, CONVERT IT INTO A *TRANSPORT RAY*. WE CAN SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO *SEEK* AID FOR OUR PEOPLE.



I VOLUNTEER, MASTER XAR! I WILL GLADLY *SACRIFICE* MY LIFE FOR OUR PEOPLE!



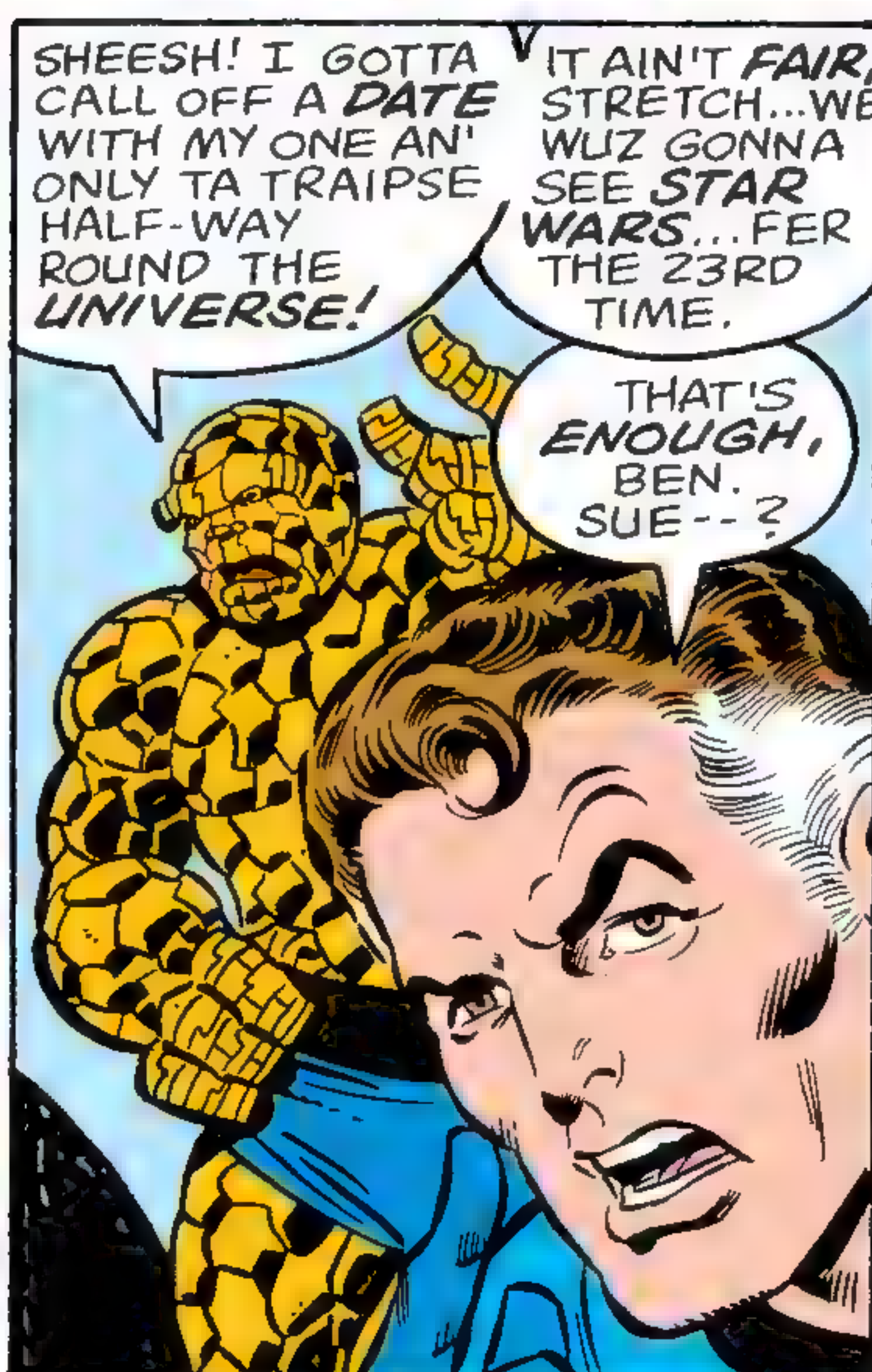
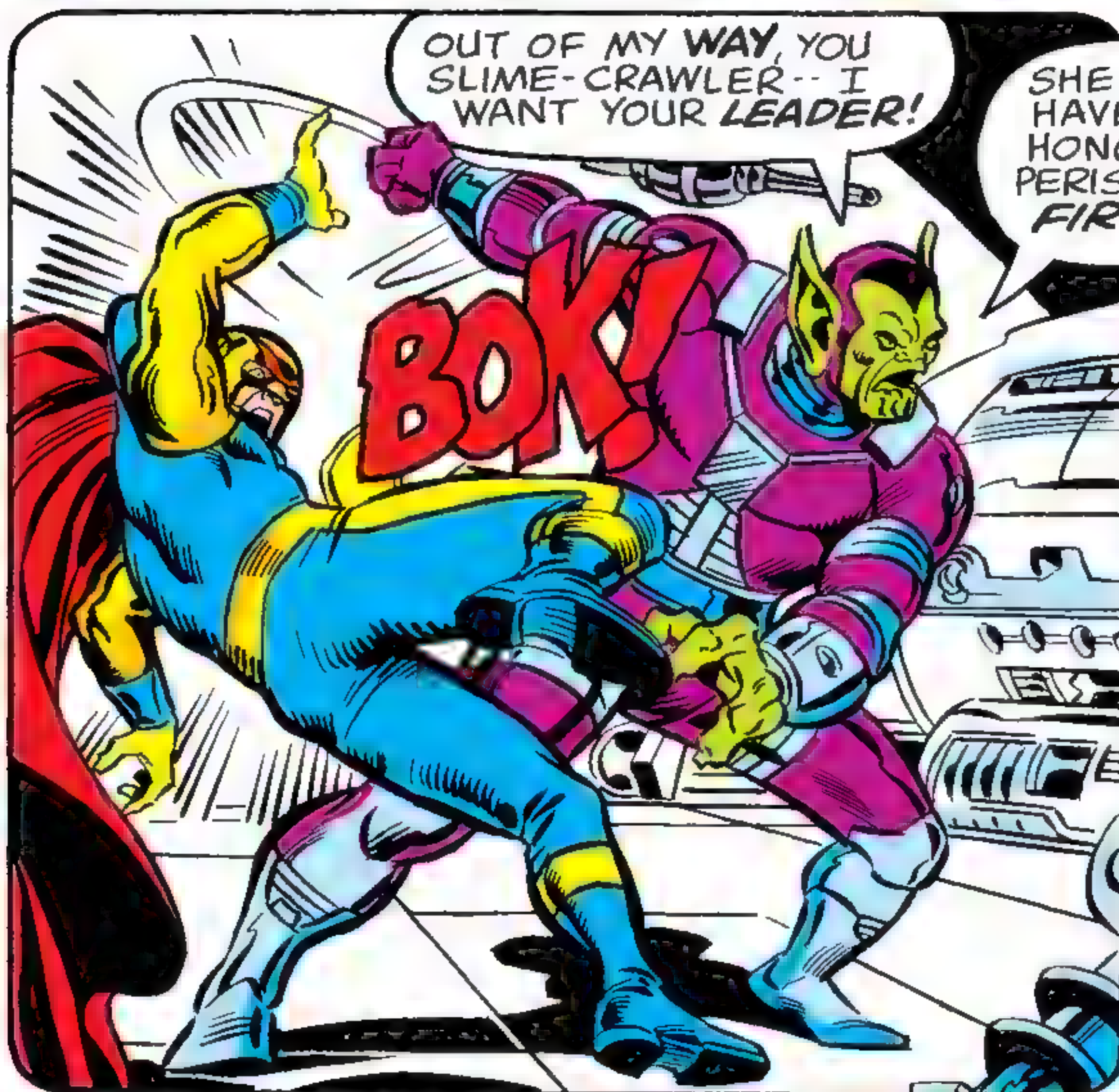
NO, TANAK, I CANNOT ALLOW IT...YOU *COMMAND* OUR FORCES. YOU ARE *NEEDED* HERE.

AS SUZERAIN, I SHALL GO.

PLEASE, ADORA-- DO NOT TAKE THAT RISK, I--I COULD NOT LIVE UNCERTAIN IF YOU *SURVIVED* THE JOURNEY OR *PERISHED* IN THE TRYING.



MY LOVE... IT IS MY *DUTY*. I AM SORRY.



IMPATIENTLY, THE F.F. WAIT SEVERAL LONG, AGONIZING MINUTES. THEN...

THAT'S THE SECOND FLARE. WHERE DO YOU THINK JOHNNY IS?

PROB'LY DOWN AT HIS GARAGE... THAT'S WHERE THE SQUIRT USUALLY PARKS HIS BUTT.

WE'LL GIVE HIM A FEW MINUTES. THEN I'LL CONTACT HIM BY RADIO.

IF YOU'RE WONDERING JUST WHERE IS JOHNNY STORM, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE CAMPUS OF EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY...

I'VE MADE MY DECISION... I'M ENROLLING IN COLLEGE AGAIN. I SHOULD NEVER'VE DROPPED OUT THE FIRST TIME

BUT I WAS A KID THEN, HAPPY AS A LARK WITH CRYSTAL AND THINKING I HAD LIFE MADE.

TWO GIRL FRIENDS LATER, I FINALLY REALIZE MY ONLY REAL SKILL IS TINKERING WITH CARS...

LOOK! IT'S THE TORCH!

...AND I DON'T WANNA WIND UP BEING THE 1970'S ANSWER TO THE FONZ!

WHAT DOES HE WANT HERE?

HI, HANDSOME, ARE YOU REALLY THE FAMOUS JOHNNY STORM?

BETTER BELIEVE IT, BEAUTIFUL--

--C'MON, I'LL PERSONALLY SHOW YOU WHY ALL THE GIRLS THINK I'M REALLY HOT STUFF!

DO YOU PULL THAT AWFUL LINE ON ALL YOUR GIRLS, JOHNNY?

NOT REALLY... SAY, YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ME YOUR NAME, YET!

LANIE... JUST CALL ME LANIE.

LANIE IT IS, BLUE-EYES.

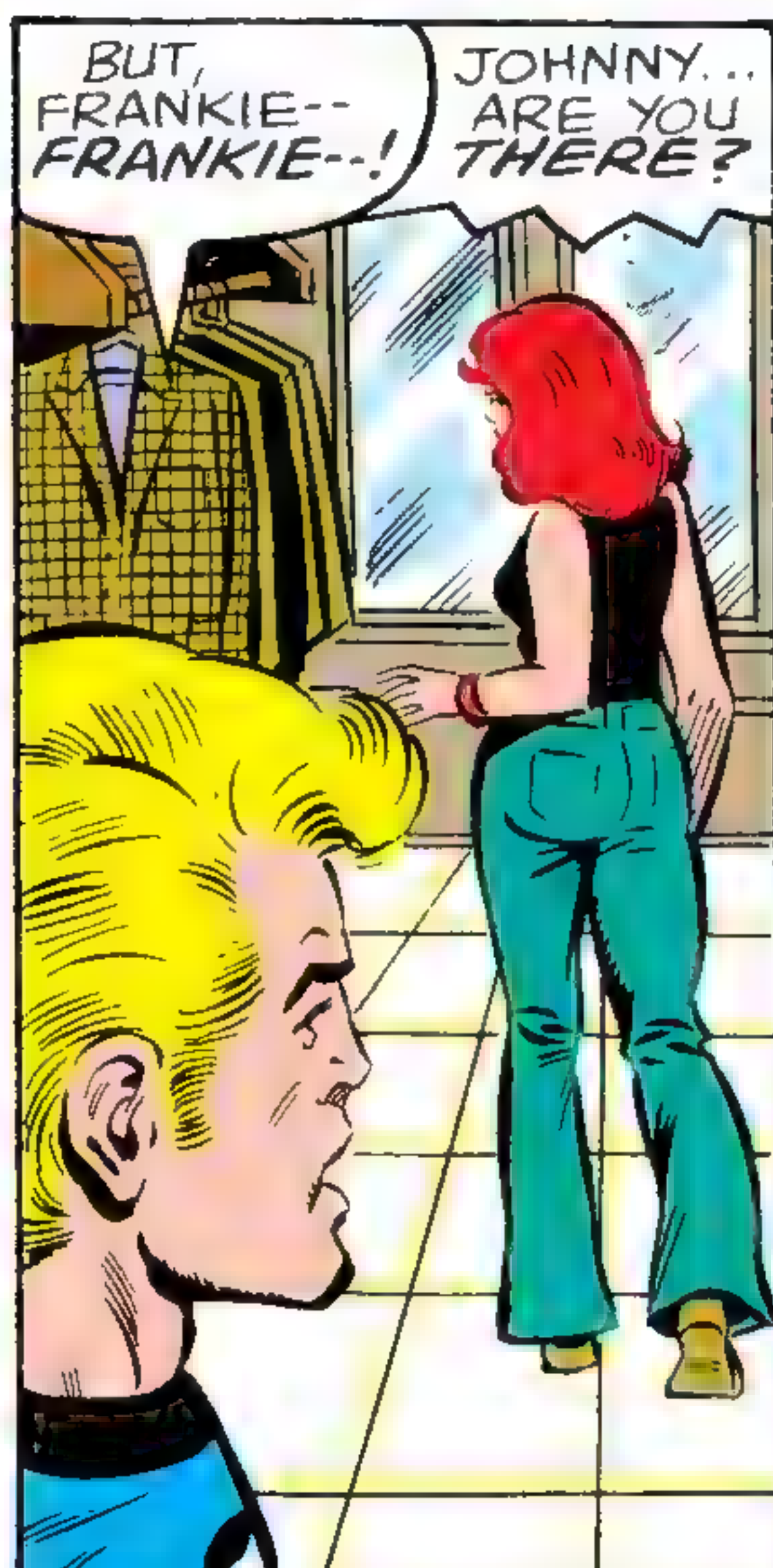
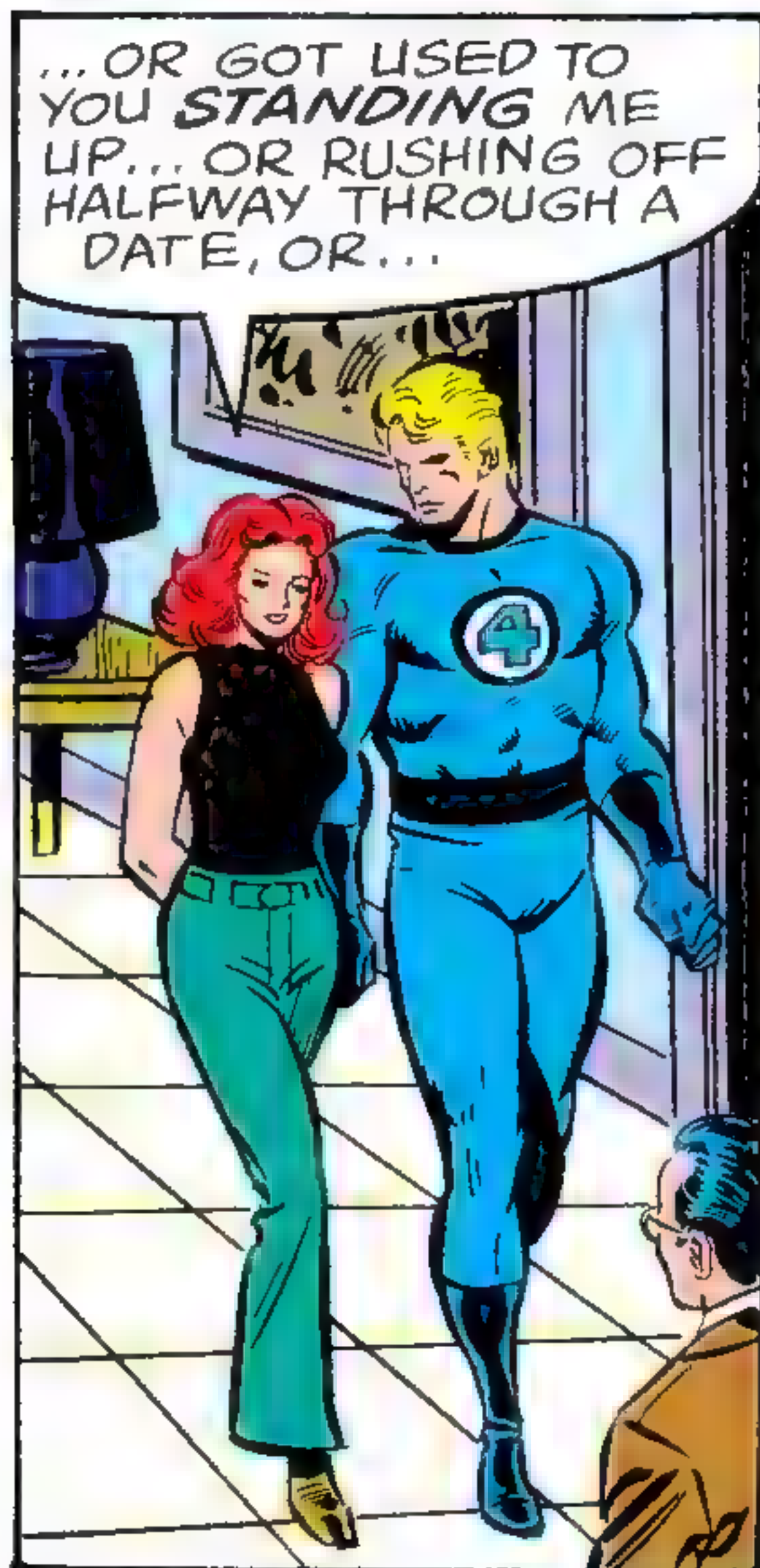
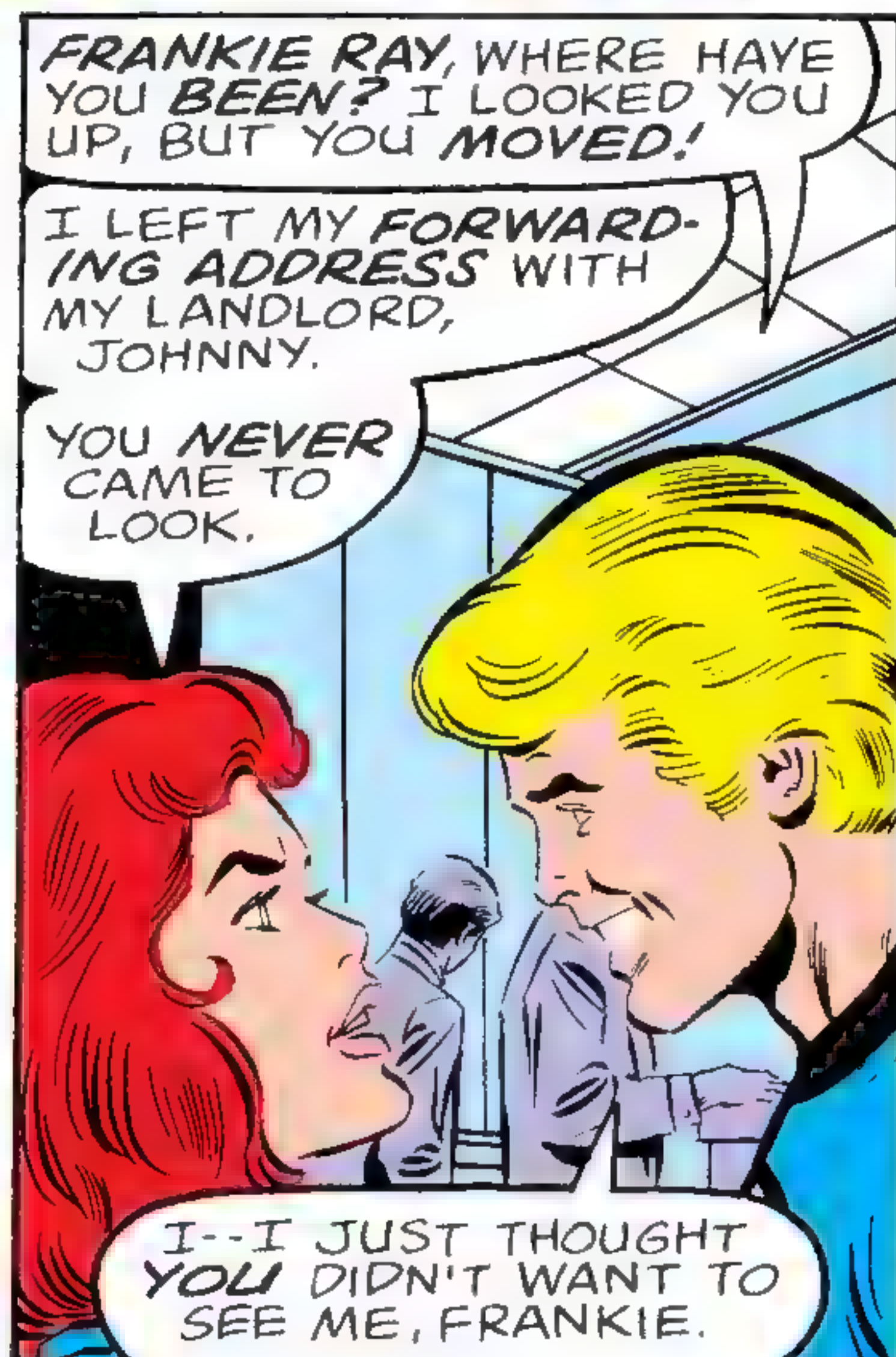
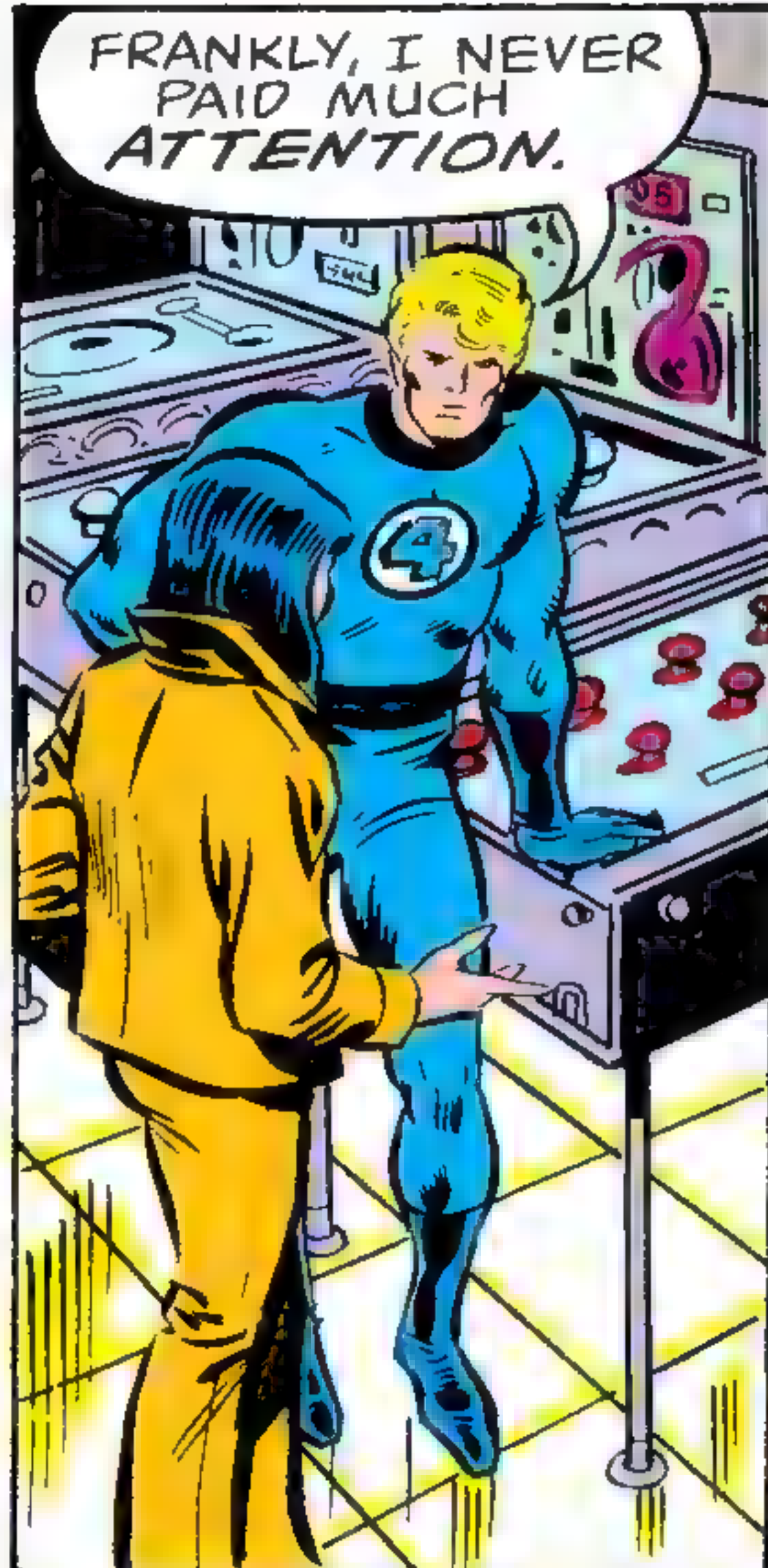
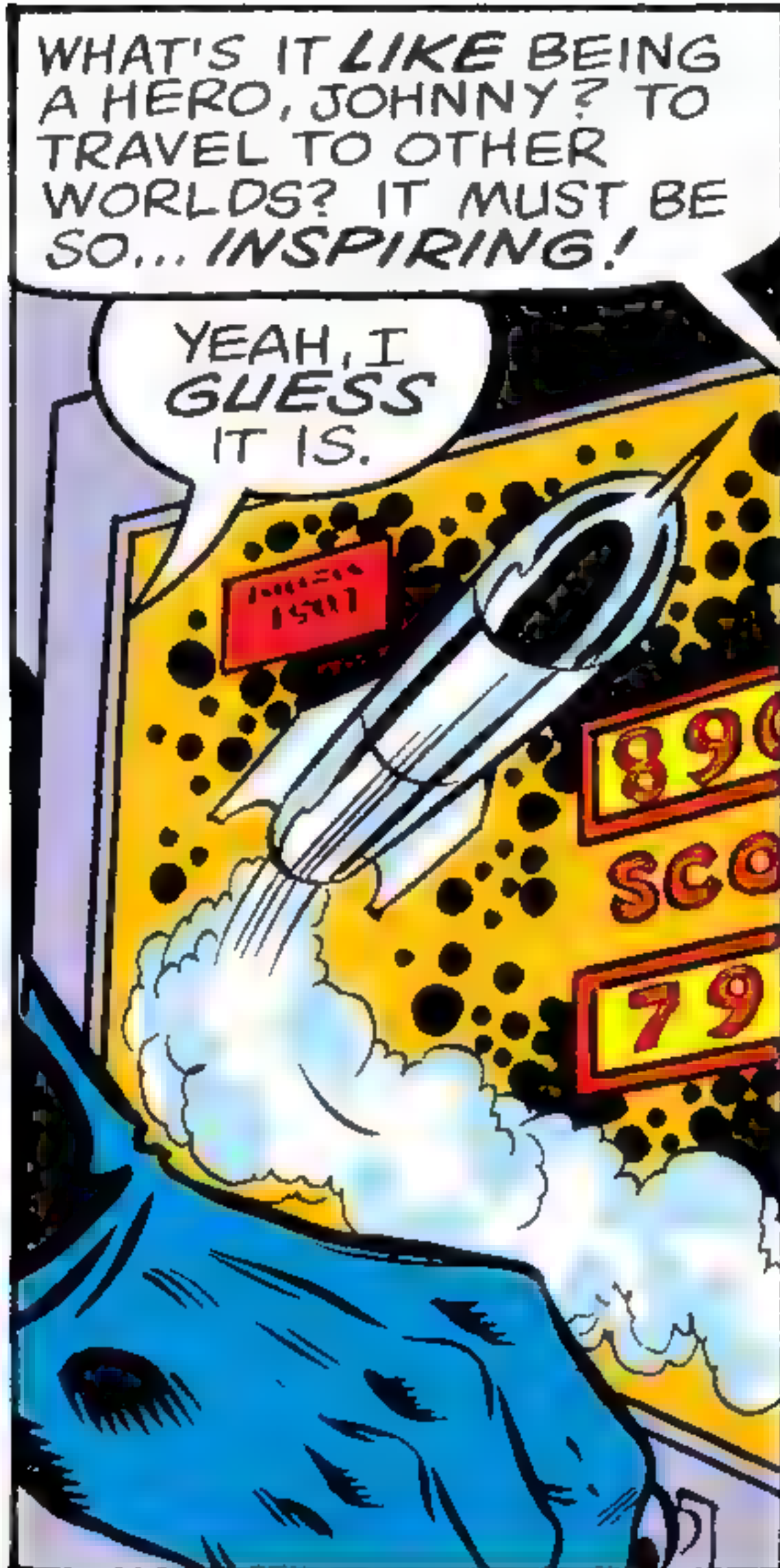
HEY, A PINBALL MACHINE... I HAVEN'T PLAYED ONE OF THOSE IN YEARS!

I USED TO BE THE BLOCK CHAMP BACK IN PUBLIC SCHOOL.

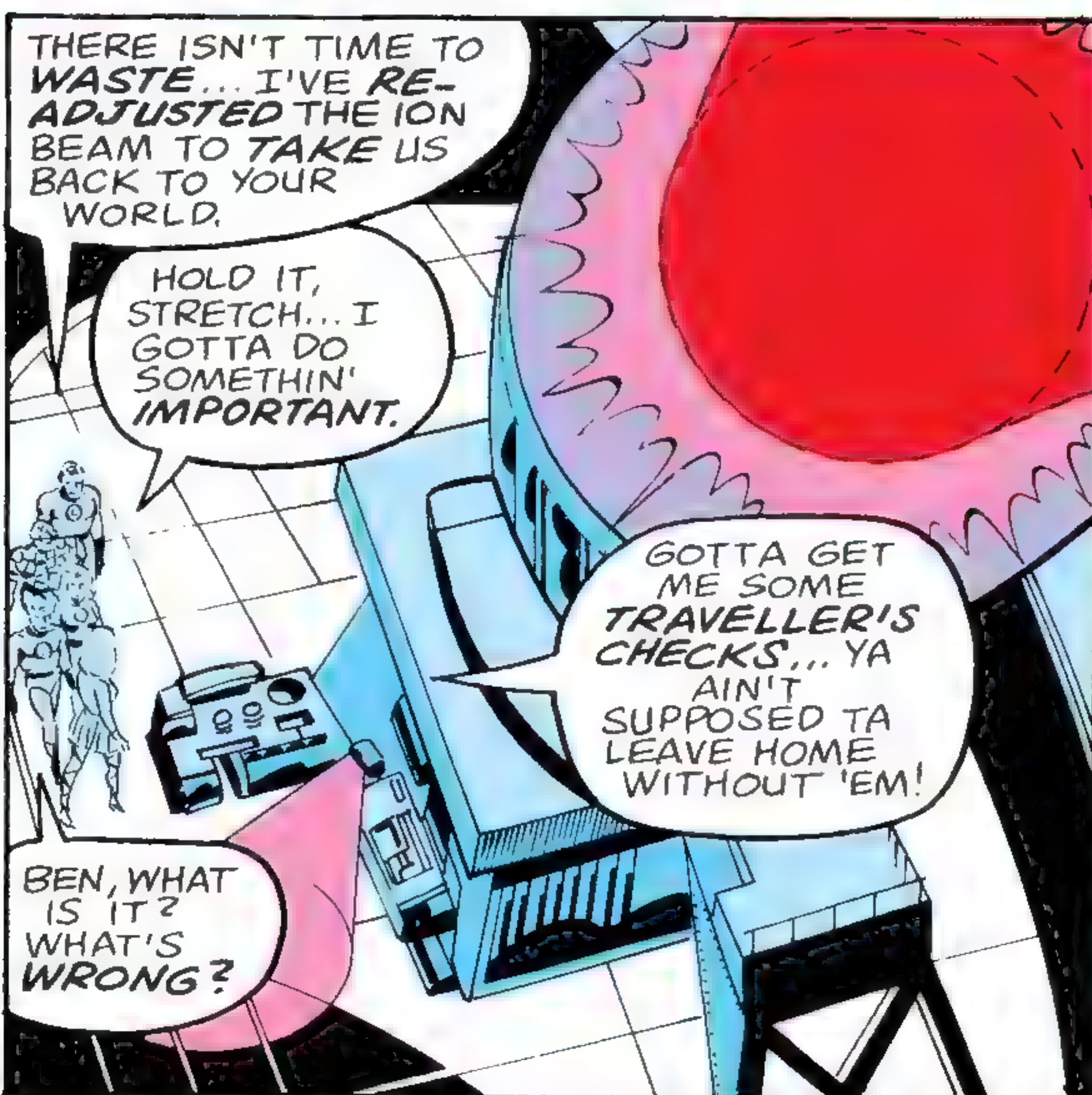
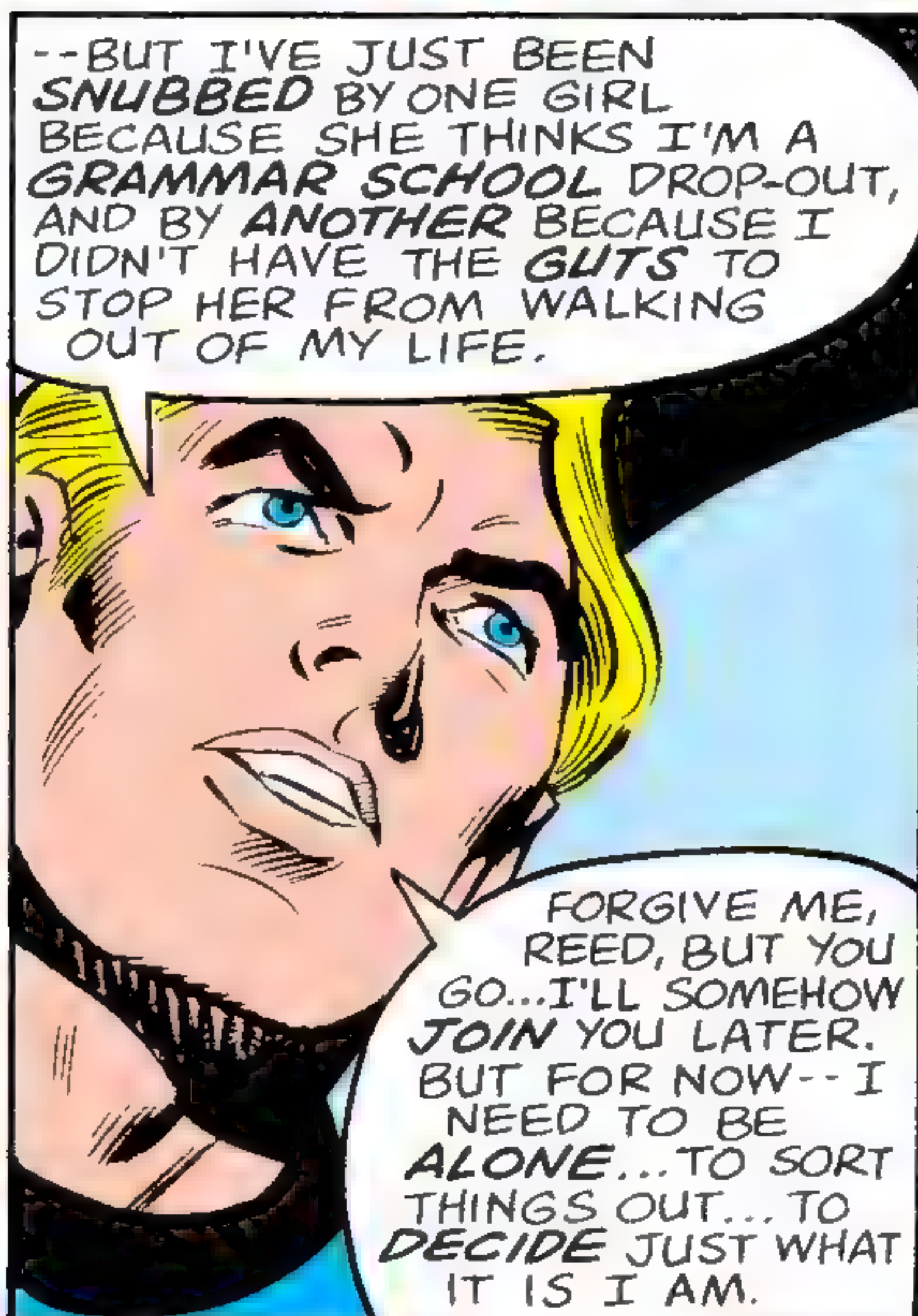
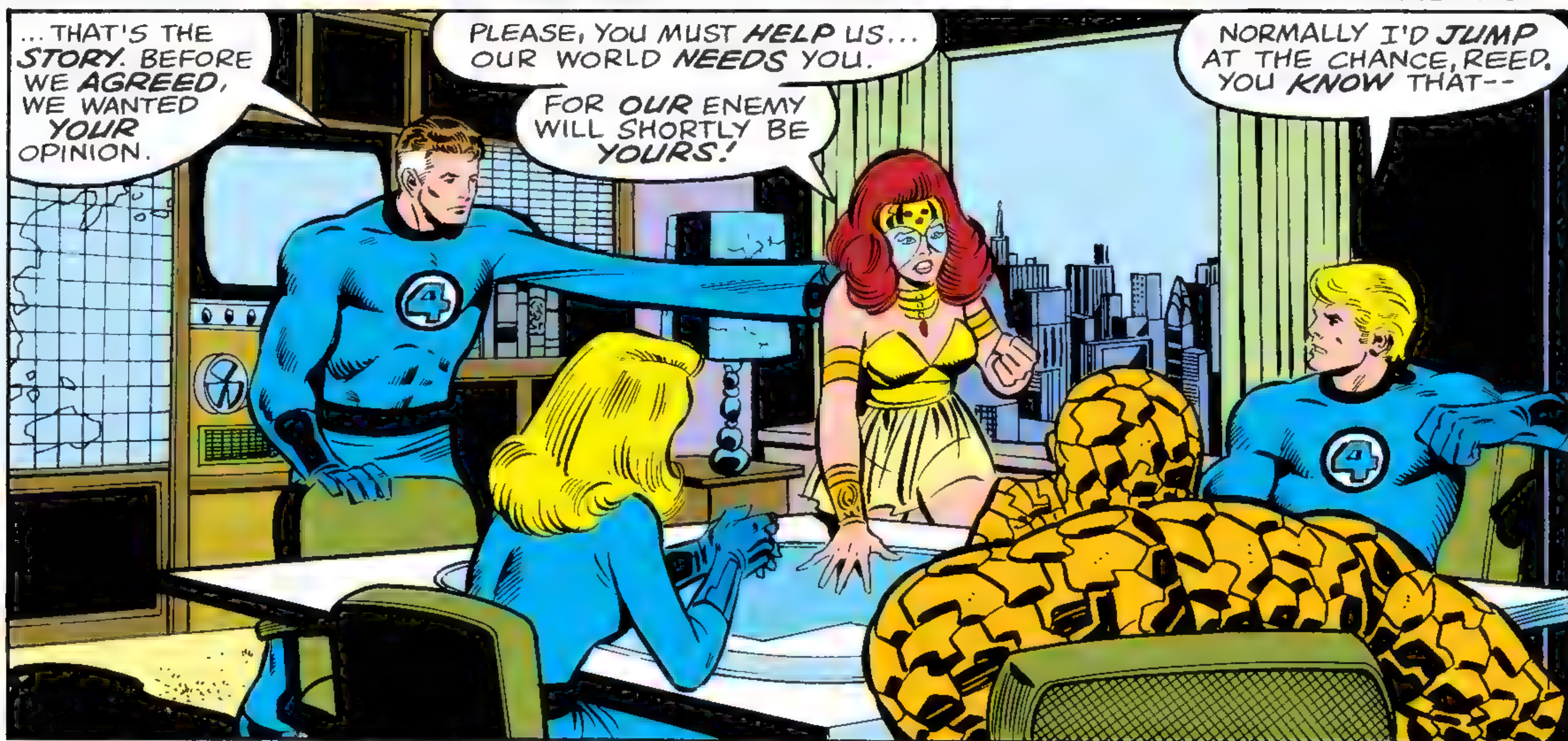
SUPERHEROES PLAY PINBALL? THAT'S A LET DOWN... I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU GUYS STUDIED TO DO WHATEVER IT IS YOU DO.

NAH, REED'S THE BRAIN-BOY OF OUR TEAM... I'M THE FUN-LOVING ONE.

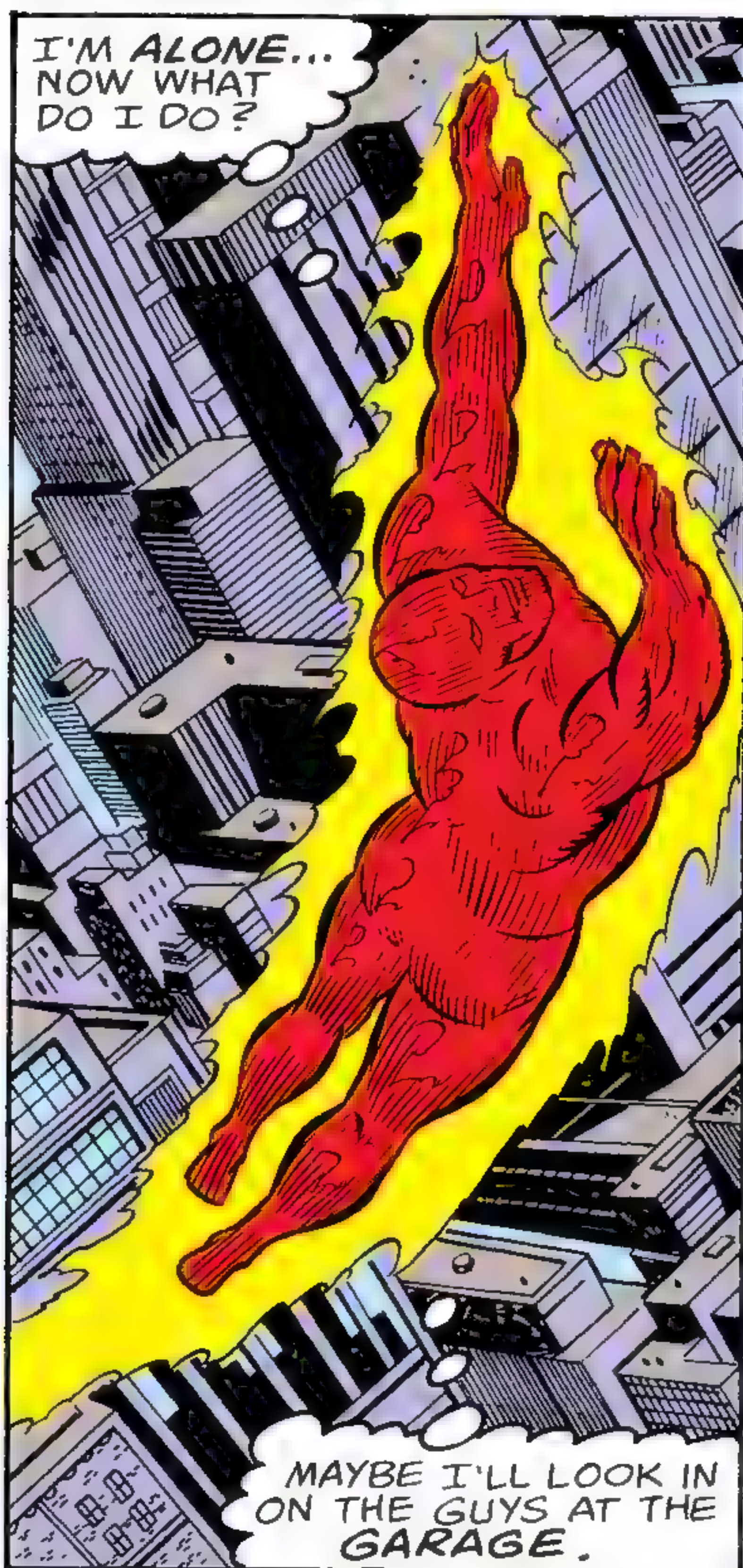
HEYYY, ALMOST 40,000 ON ONE BALL... NOT BAD, EH?



A FEW MINUTES LATER, A SLIGHTLY *MIFFED* JOHNNY STORM SILENTLY ENTERS THE BAXTER BUILDING...



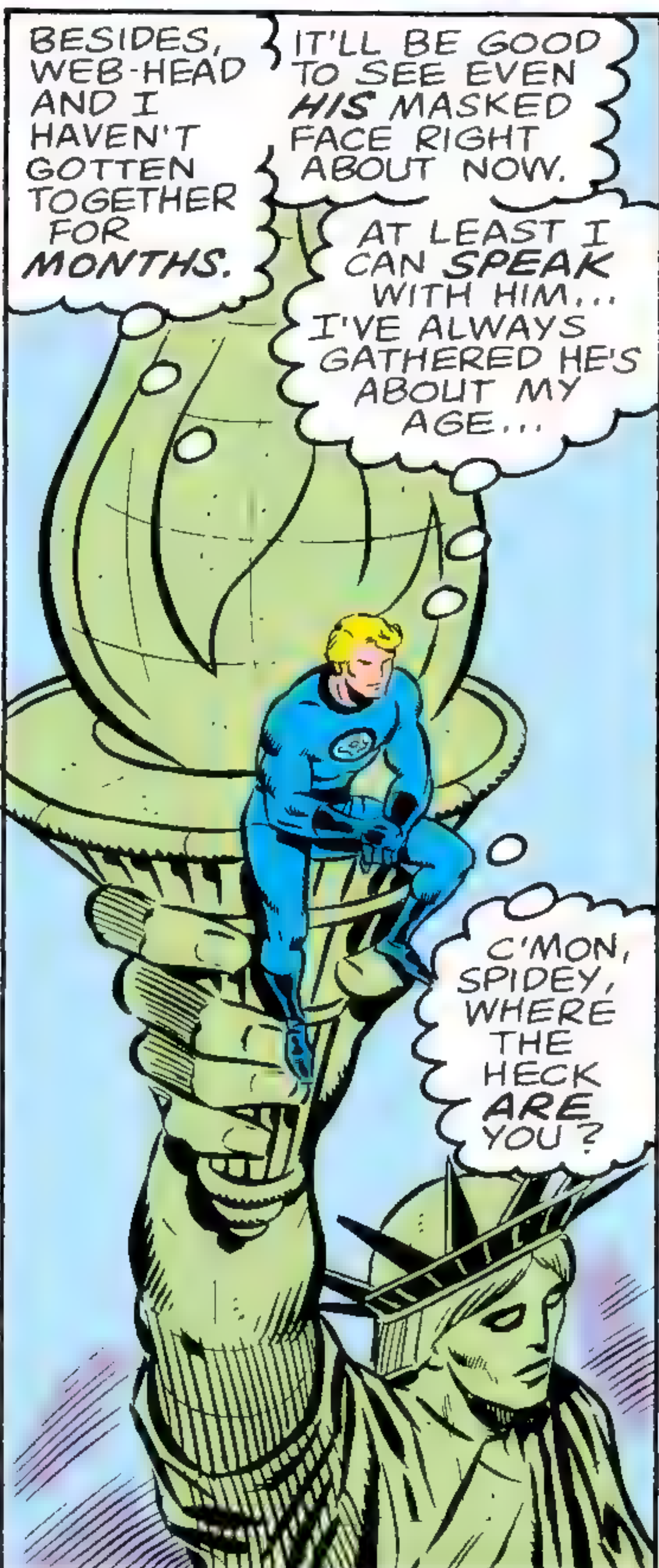
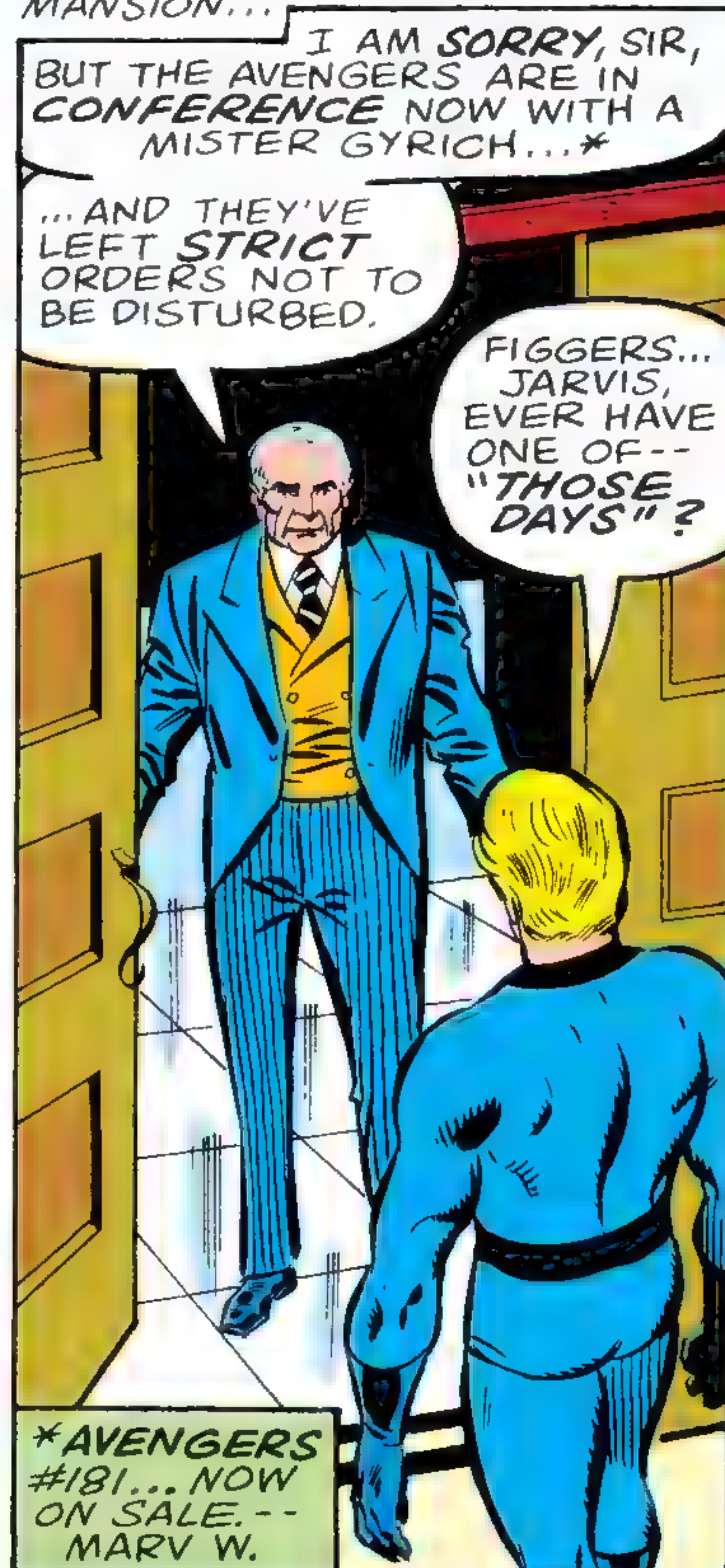
JOHNNY WAITS SILENTLY UNTIL HIS FRIENDS VANISH, AND THEN...



AND SO, IT IS A DISTRAUGHT JOHNNY STORM WHO TAKES TO THE SKIES A FEW MOMENTS LATER, AND...



AND A FEW MINUTES LATER AT THE AVENGERS' UPTOWN MANSION...

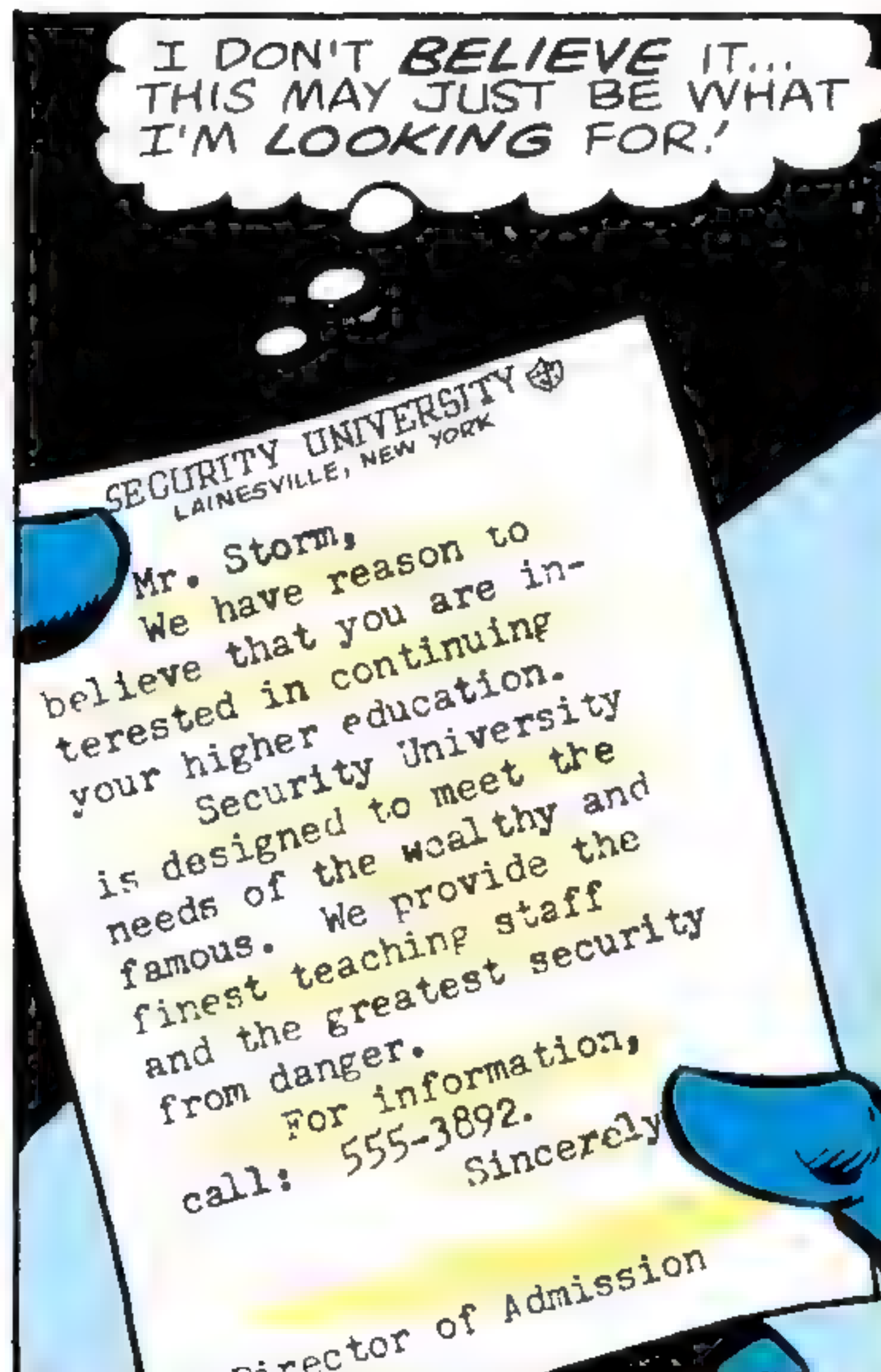




NOTHING TO **DO**... NO ONE TO **SEE**... AND EVERYONE THINKS A SUPER-HERO'S LIFE IS A **THRILL-A-MINUTE!** SURE!

WELL, I HAVE THIS **LETTER** SUE GAVE ME.

SPECIAL DELIVERY? I WONDER WHO IT'S FROM...



I DON'T **BELIEVE** IT... THIS MAY JUST BE WHAT I'M **LOOKING FOR!**

SECURITY UNIVERSITY
LAINESVILLE, NEW YORK

Mr. Storm,
We have reason to believe that you are interested in continuing your higher education. Security University is designed to meet the needs of the wealthy and famous. We provide the finest teaching staff and the greatest security from danger.
For information, call: 555-3892.
Sincerely,
Director of Admission



IN **OTHER** SCHOOLS I'D BE CONSIDERED **SPECIAL**... I'D NEVER BE LEFT ALONE...

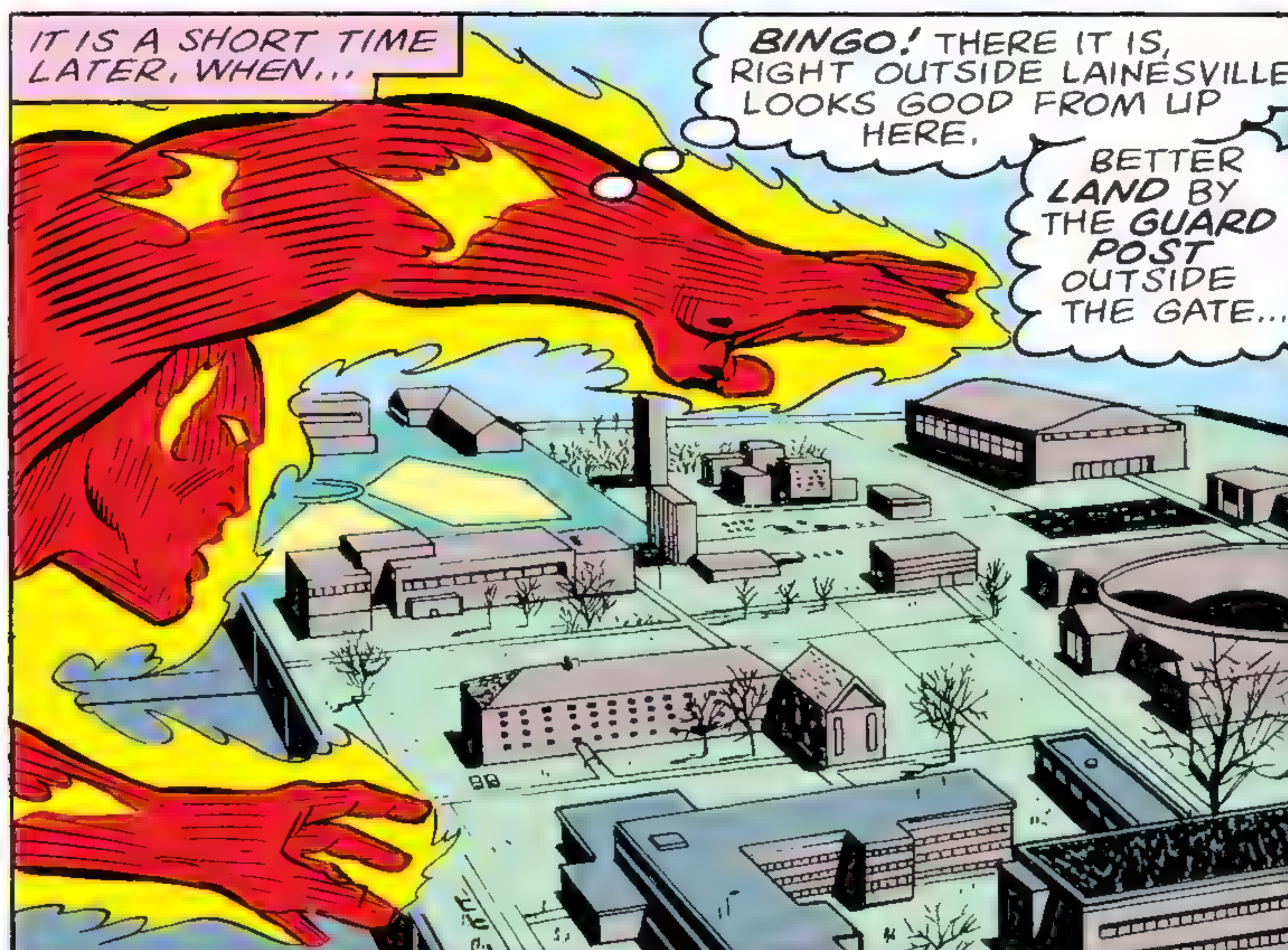
THIS PLACE SOUNDS LIKE I'D FIT IN **PERFECTLY!**



SECURITY COLLEGE, HERE I COME!

STRANGE, I'VE NEVER **HEARD** ABOUT THEM BEFORE... BUT THEN MAYBE THAT'S TO **AID** IN THEIR SECURITY.

AND HOW DID THEY **KNOW** I WAS INTERESTED IN COLLEGE? HMMM, MAYBE SOMEONE SAW ME VISITING E.S.U.'S CAMPUS.



IT IS A SHORT TIME LATER, WHEN...

BINGO! THERE IT IS, RIGHT OUTSIDE LAINESVILLE. LOOKS GOOD FROM UP HERE.

BETTER **LAND** BY THE **GUARD POST** OUTSIDE THE GATE...

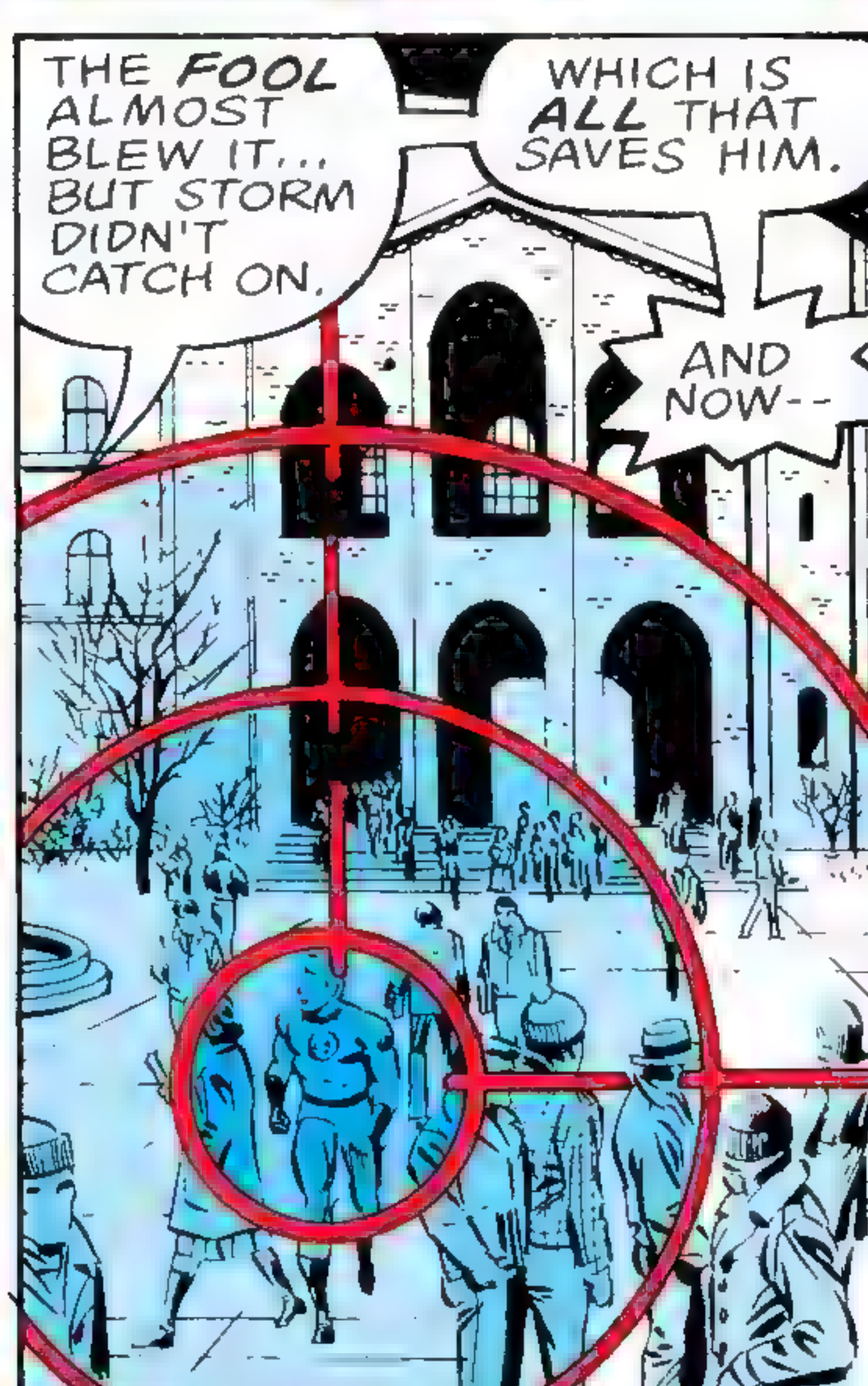


THE **HUMAN TORCH** GLIDES TO A STOP AND HIS **FLAME** FLICKERS INTO THE WIND AND THEN **DIES**...

STORM... WE WERE **TOLD** TO EXPECT YOU.

...AH, YES, MR. STORM... I ONLY KNEW IT MYSELF A FEW MINUTES AGO! HOW COULD--

WE ARE TOLD ABOUT **ALL** POTENTIAL STUDENTS, SIR. YOU MAY GO AHEAD.



THE **FOOL** ALMOST BLEW IT... BUT STORM DIDN'T CATCH ON.

WHICH IS **ALL** THAT SAVES HIM.

AND NOW--

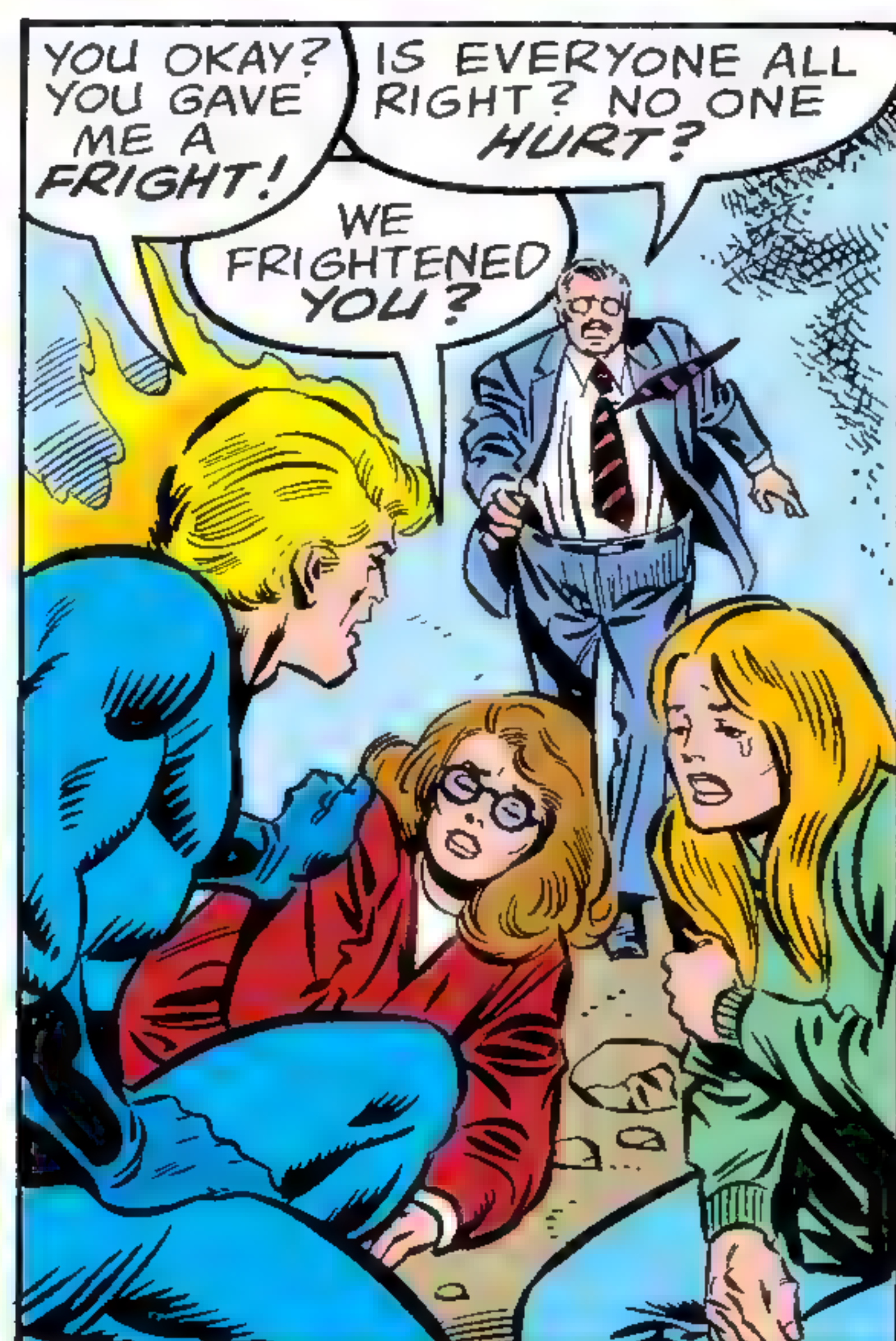
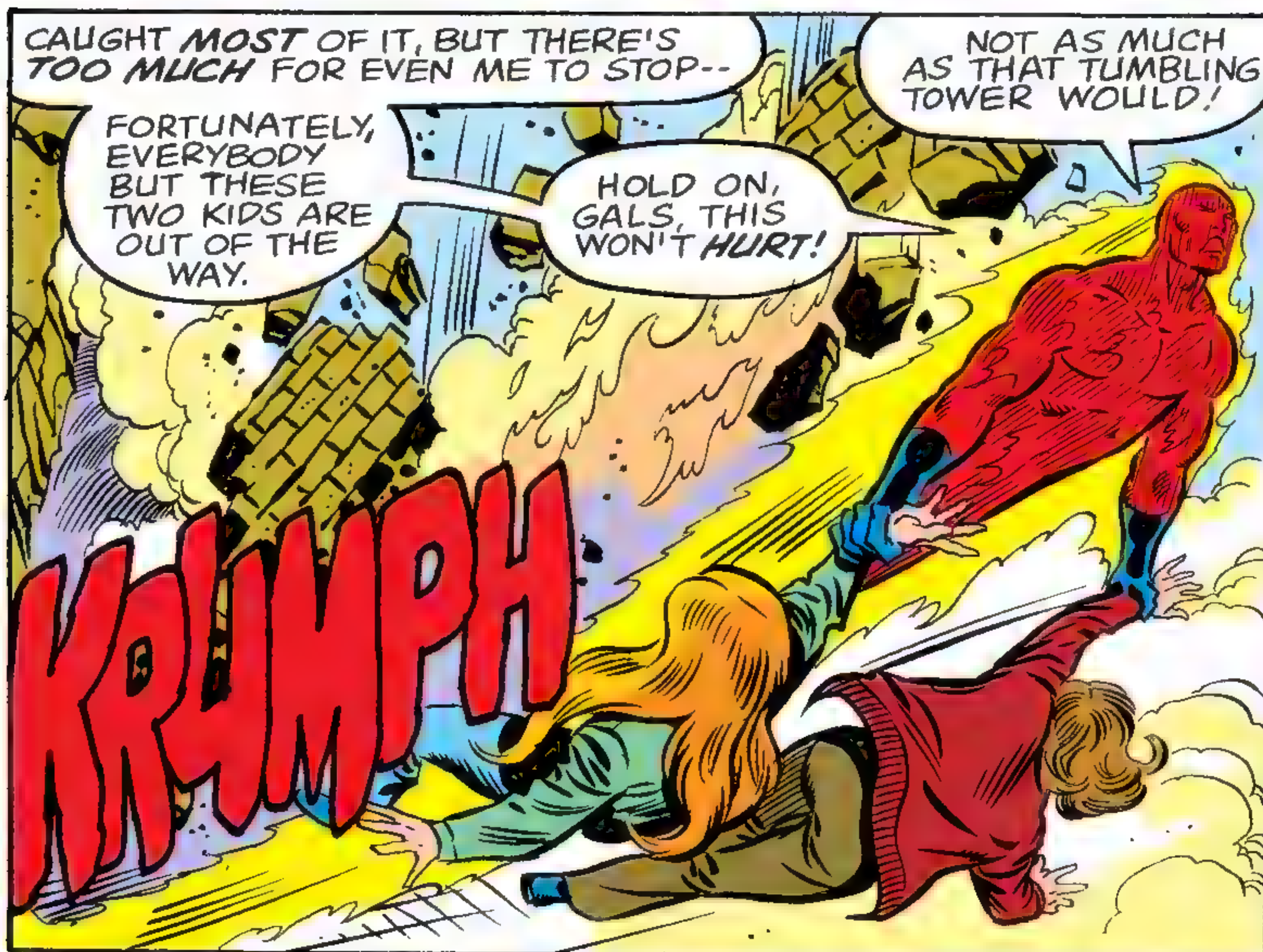
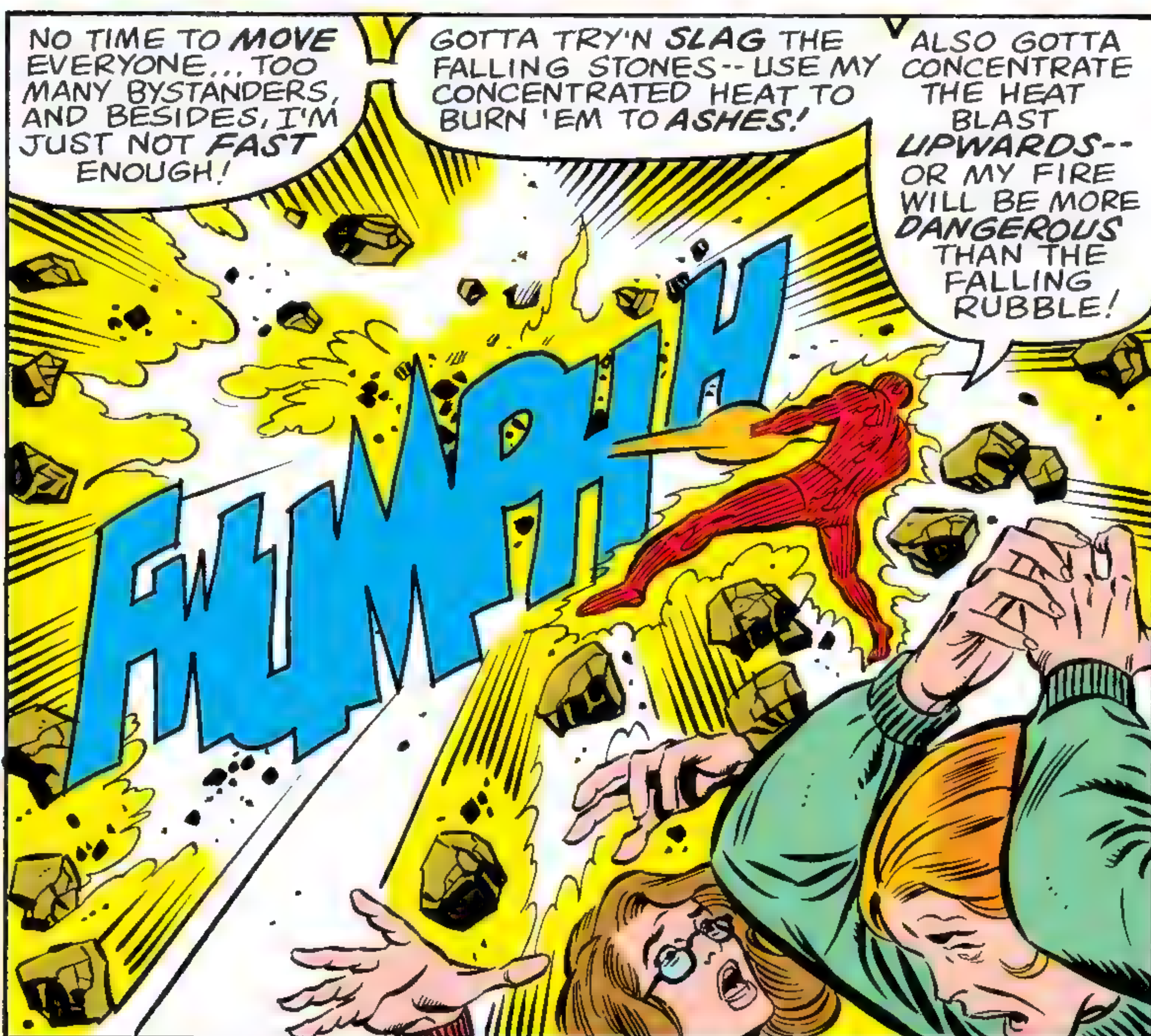
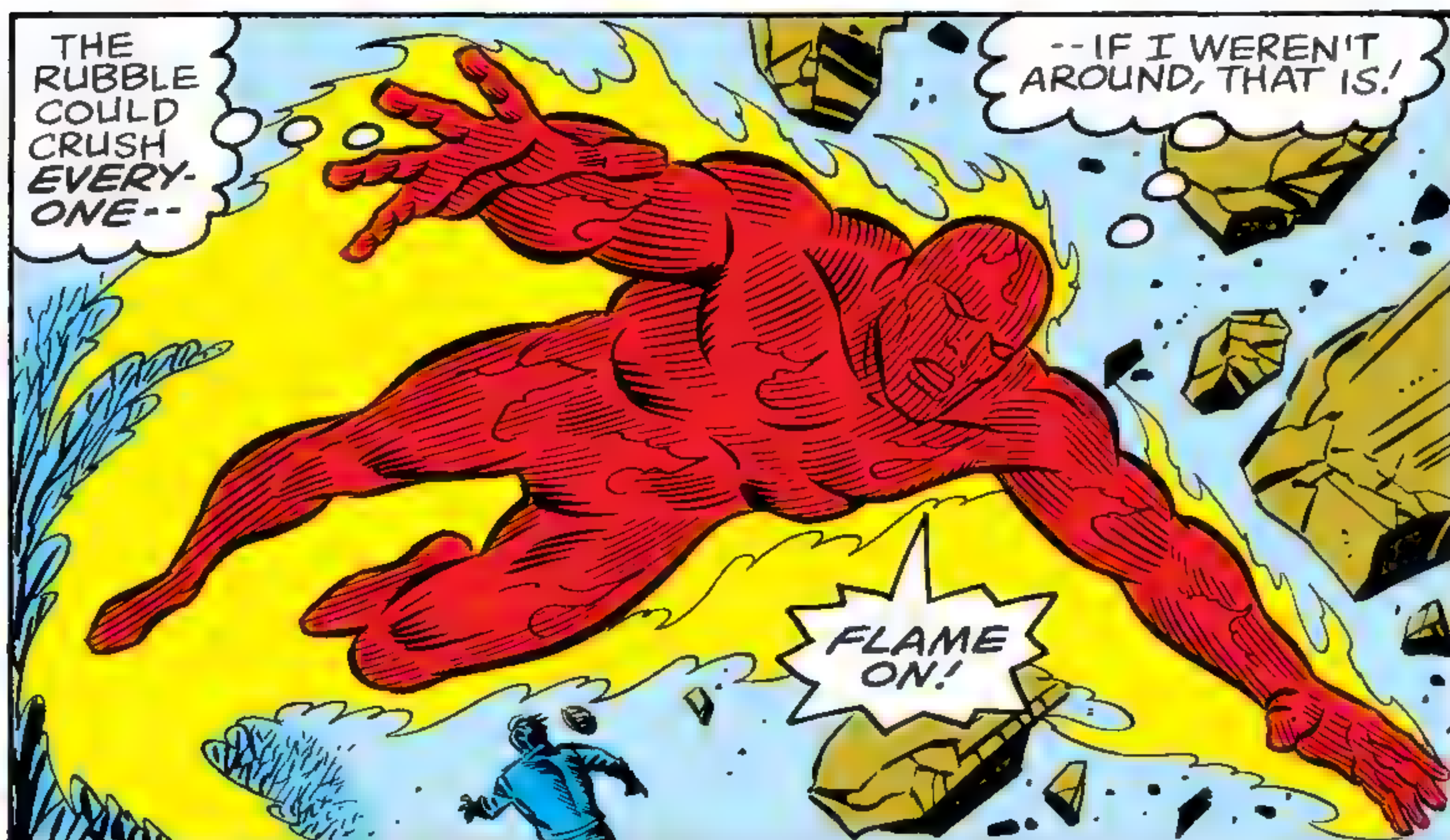


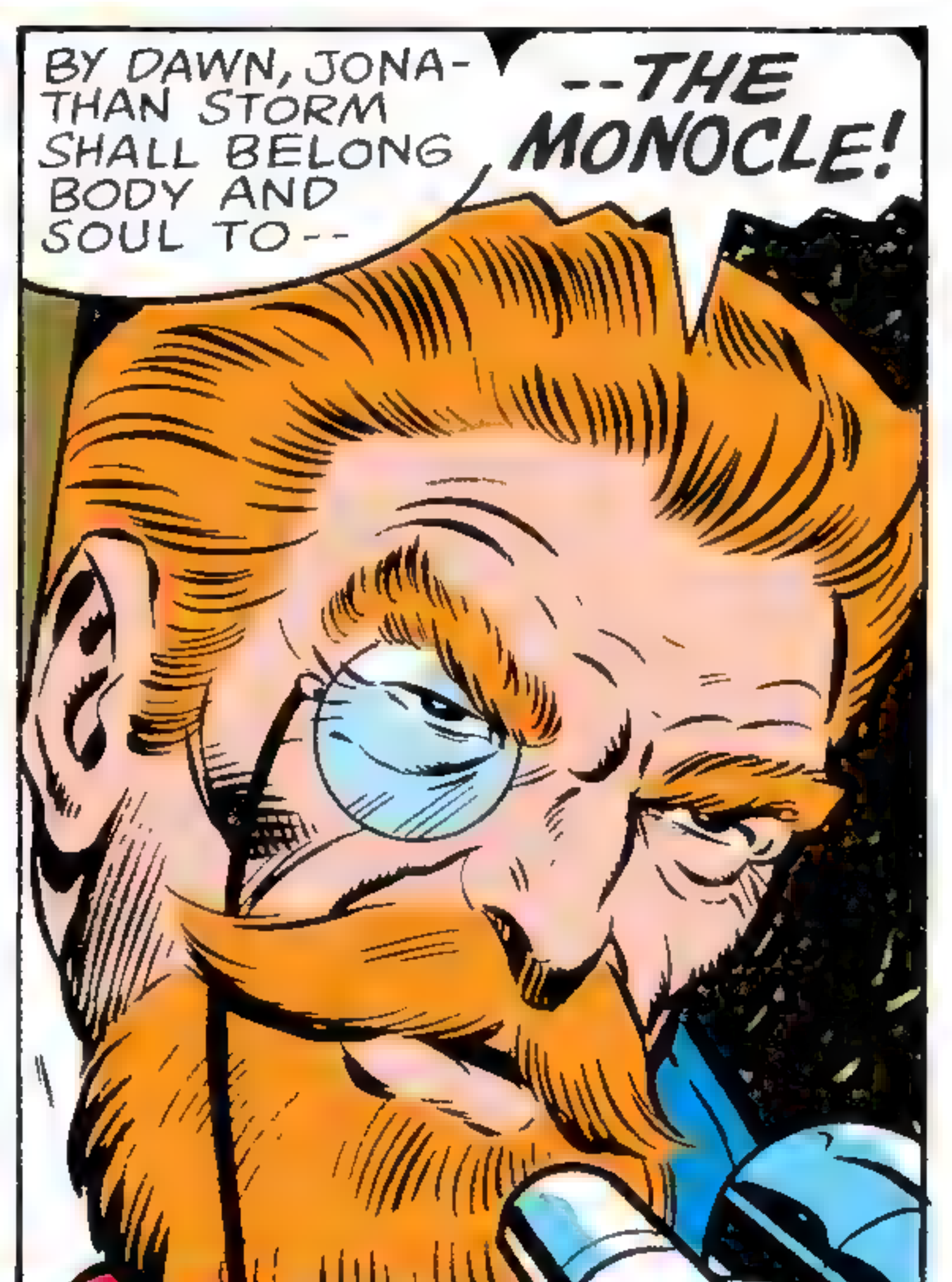
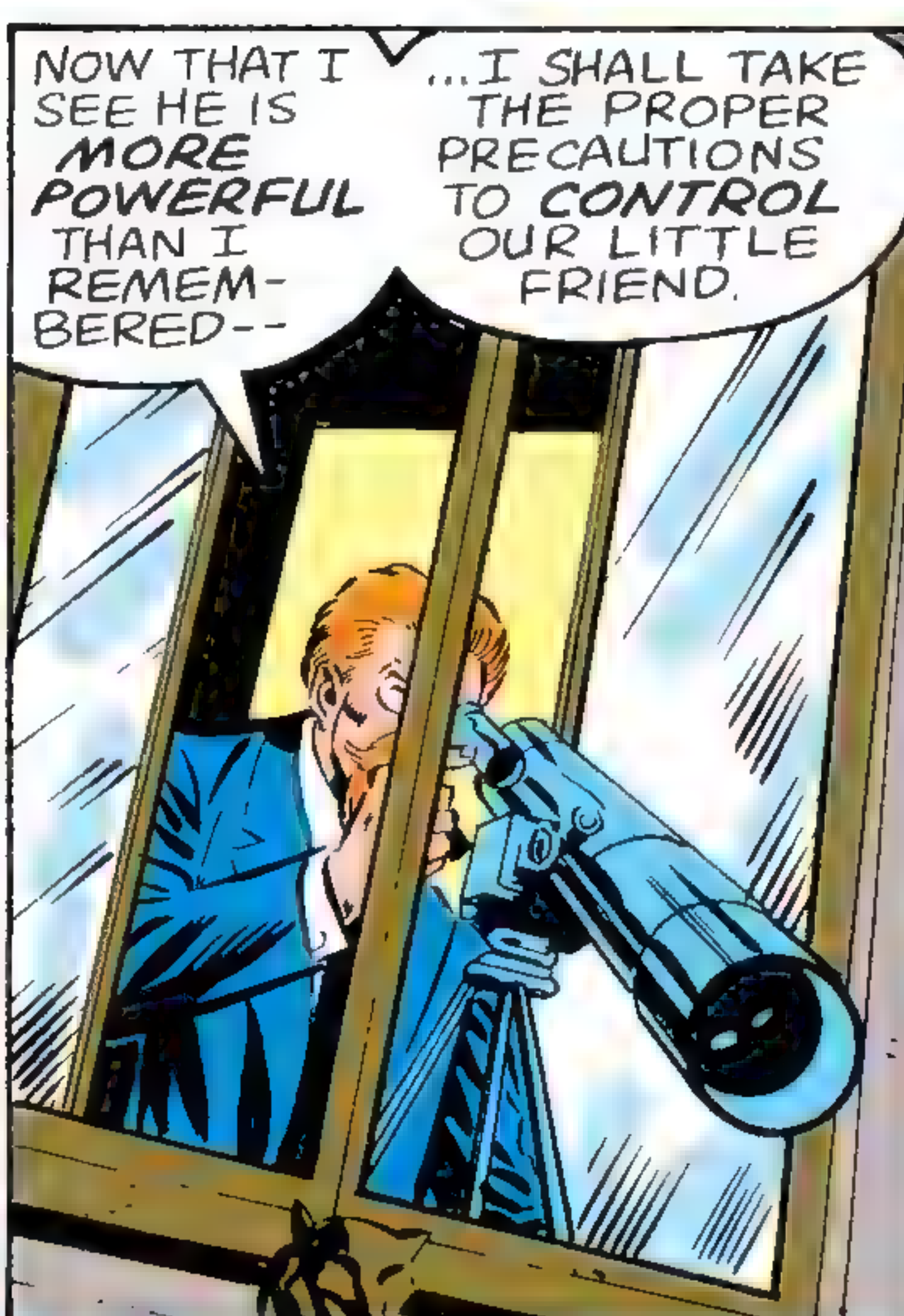
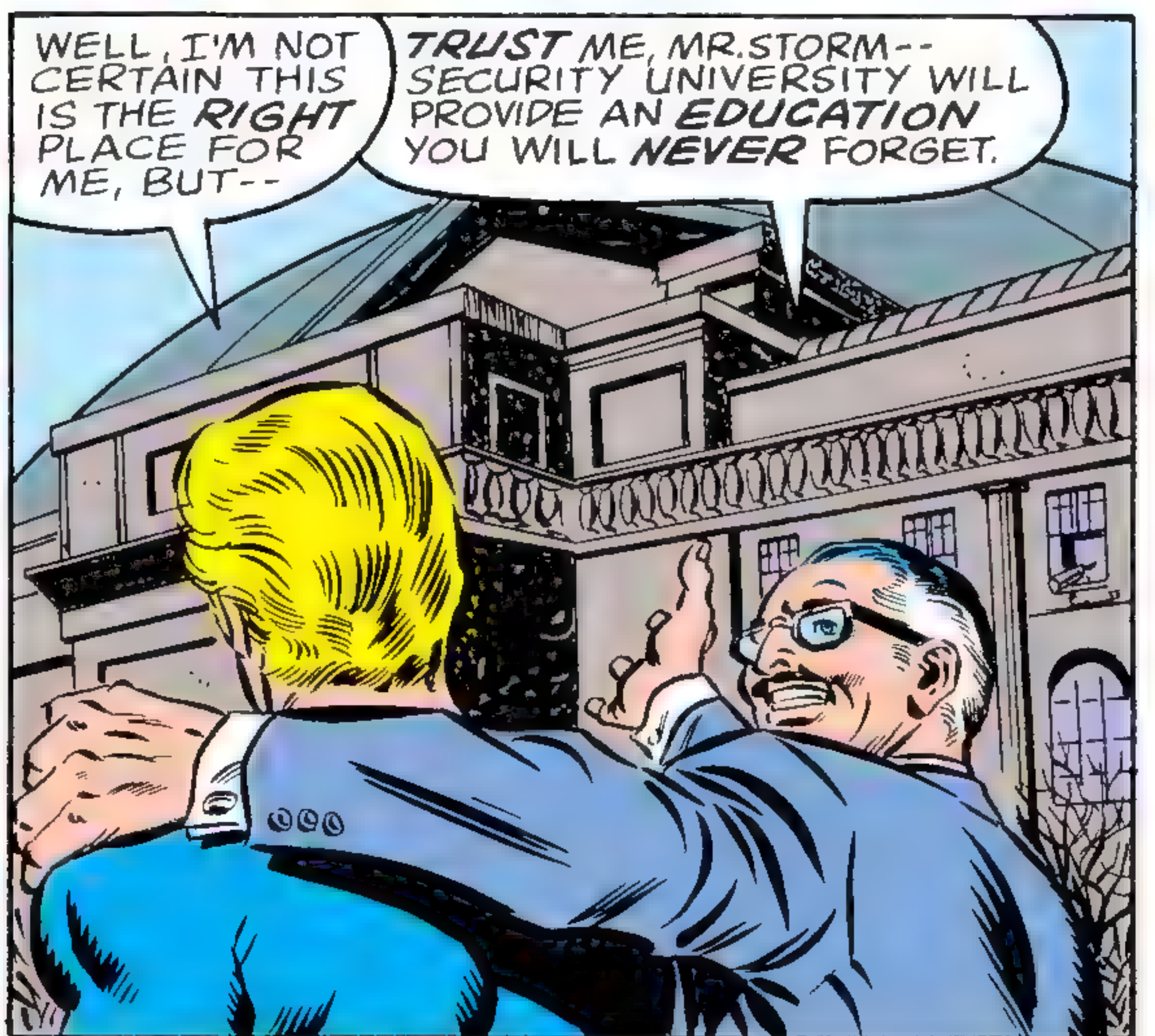
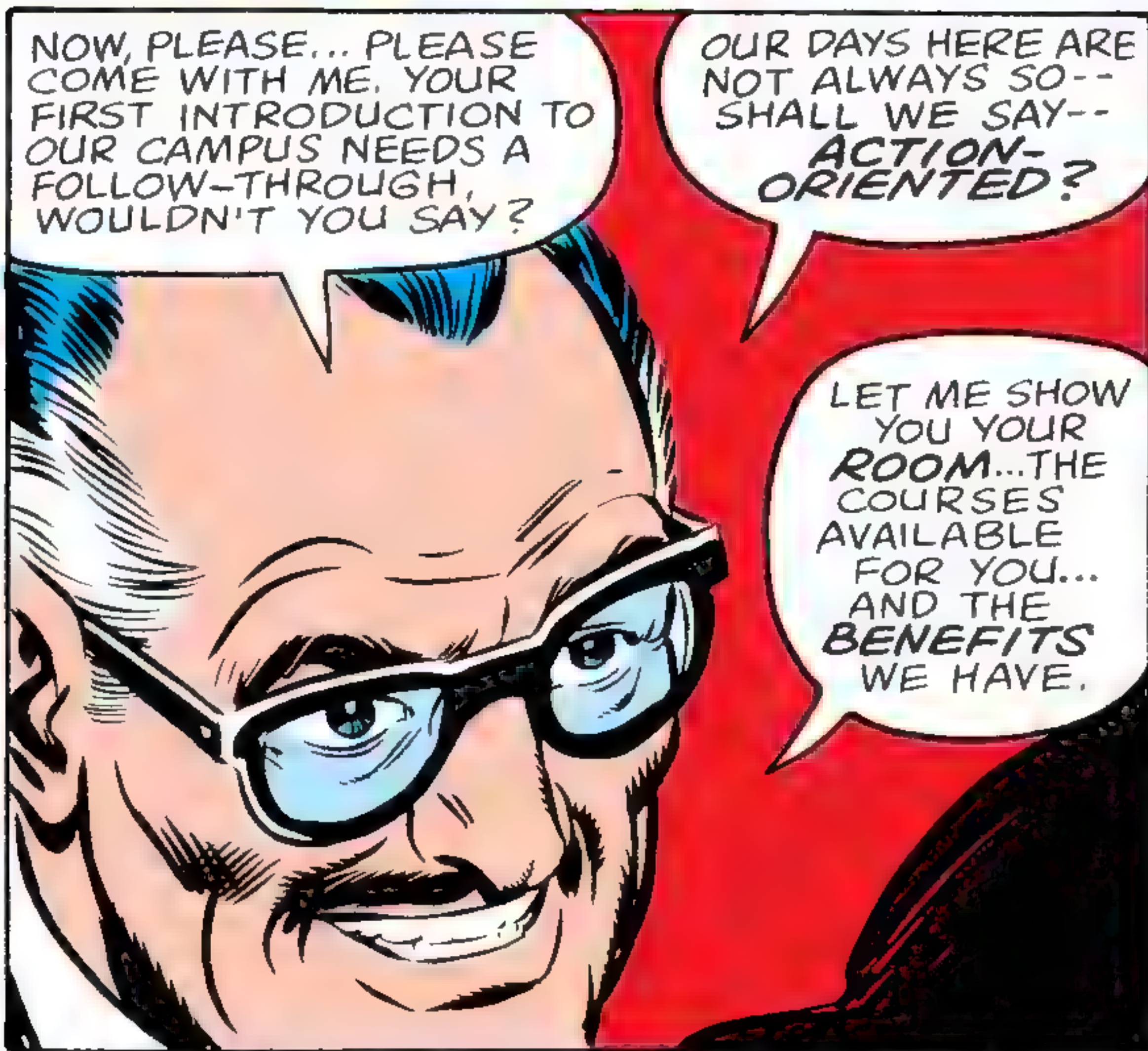
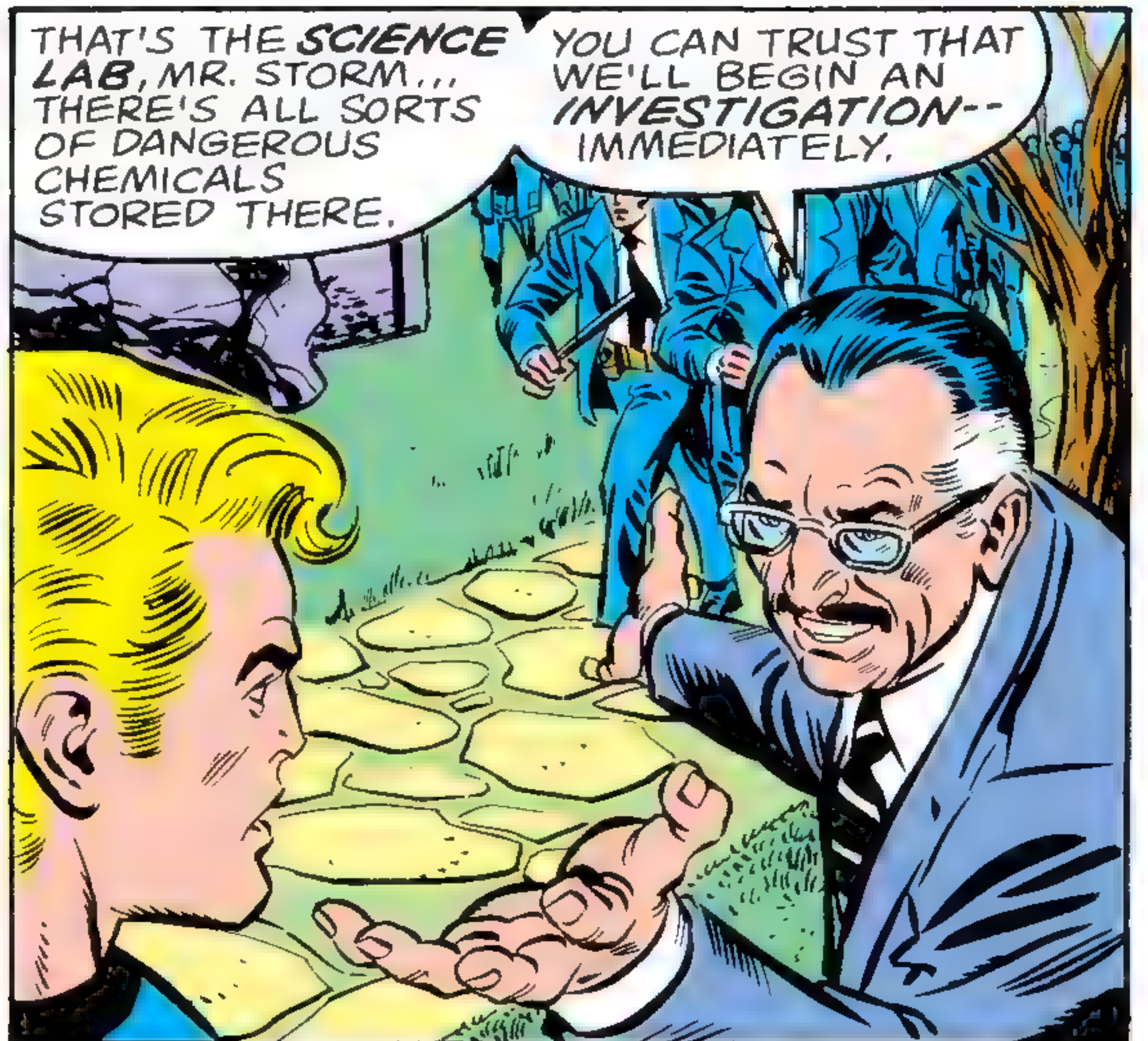
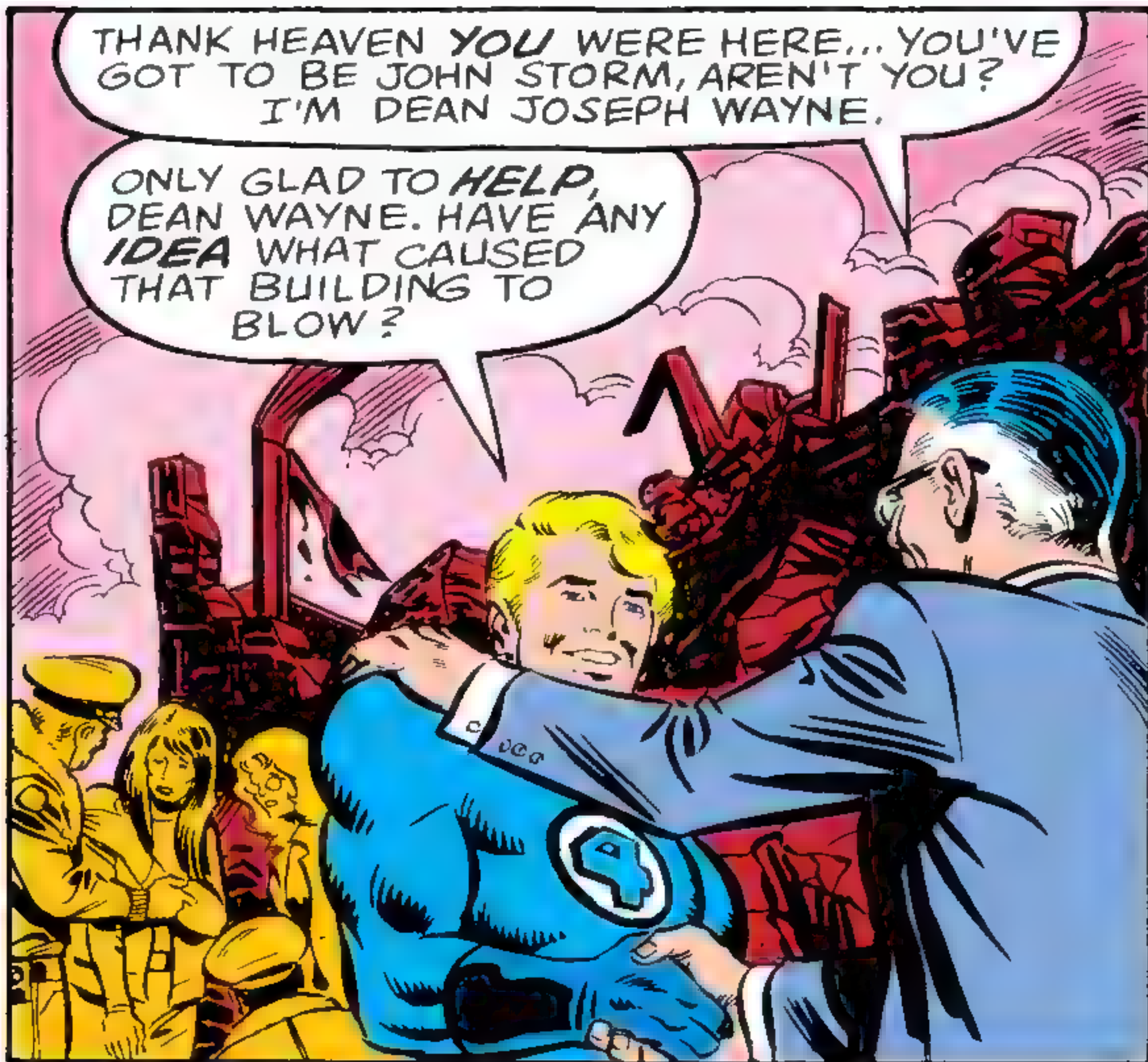
INCREDIBLE CAMPUS... OPEN SPACES. EVEN THE **GUARDS** DON'T BOTHER ME.

I THINK I'M GONNA **LIKE** IT HERE.

BUT...

... A MOMENT LATER, AN UNSEEN RAY BLAST HAS AN UNEXPECTED EFFECT...





NEXT ISSUE: WHEN WORLDS DIE!

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FANTASTIC FOUR



A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same again!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**®

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NOVAK
LETTERER

GLYNIS W.
COLORIST

J. SHOOTER
CON. ED.

THE FABULOUS F.F. FIND THEMSELVES IN A TERRIBLE
BATTLE BEYOND OUR GALAXY!

WHEN WORLDS DIE!

ADORA, SUZERAIN OF A WORLD SPLIT
IN FOUR PARTS IN THE ANDROMEDA
GALAXY, WAS PURSUED TO EARTH BY
A DEMON SKRULL. NOW, REED
RICHARDS, HIS WIFE, SUE, AND THE
MONSTROUS ORANGE-HIDED THING,
RETURN TO HER WAR-TORN WORLD
WITH HOPES OF LIBERATING IT FROM
THEIR ALIEN INVADERS.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
WE'RE FLASHIN'
THROUGH SPACE
FASTER'N IT TAKES
TA GET TO THE
CORNER!

SOMEHOW THEY'VE
CONVERTED MY ION
TRACKING BEAM INTO
A TELEPORTATION
RAY!

SIT BACK NOW. STEADY
YOURSELF. WHEN YOU TURN
THE PAGE, YOU WILL BE
TRANSPORTED INTO A
WORLD OF WONDERS THE
LIKE OF WHICH YOU'VE
NEVER SEEN BEFORE!

SUDDENLY, THERE IS THE THUNDEROUS ROAR OF PHOTON CANNONS WHICH DEAFEN THE ASTONISHED FANTASTIC FOUR. SAVAGE SKRULL SPACERS SWEEP OVER THE HORIZON BLASTING PROUD ALIEN BUILDINGS WITH TERRIBLE DESTRUCTION.

ALL THAT CAN BE HEARD IS THE PITIFUL WAIL OF A WORLD IN ITS DEATH THROES; A WORLD THAT KNOWS IT CANNOT LONG ENDURE.

IT'S UNBELIEVABLE, REED. I'VE NEVER WITNESSED SUCH DESTRUCTION BEFORE.

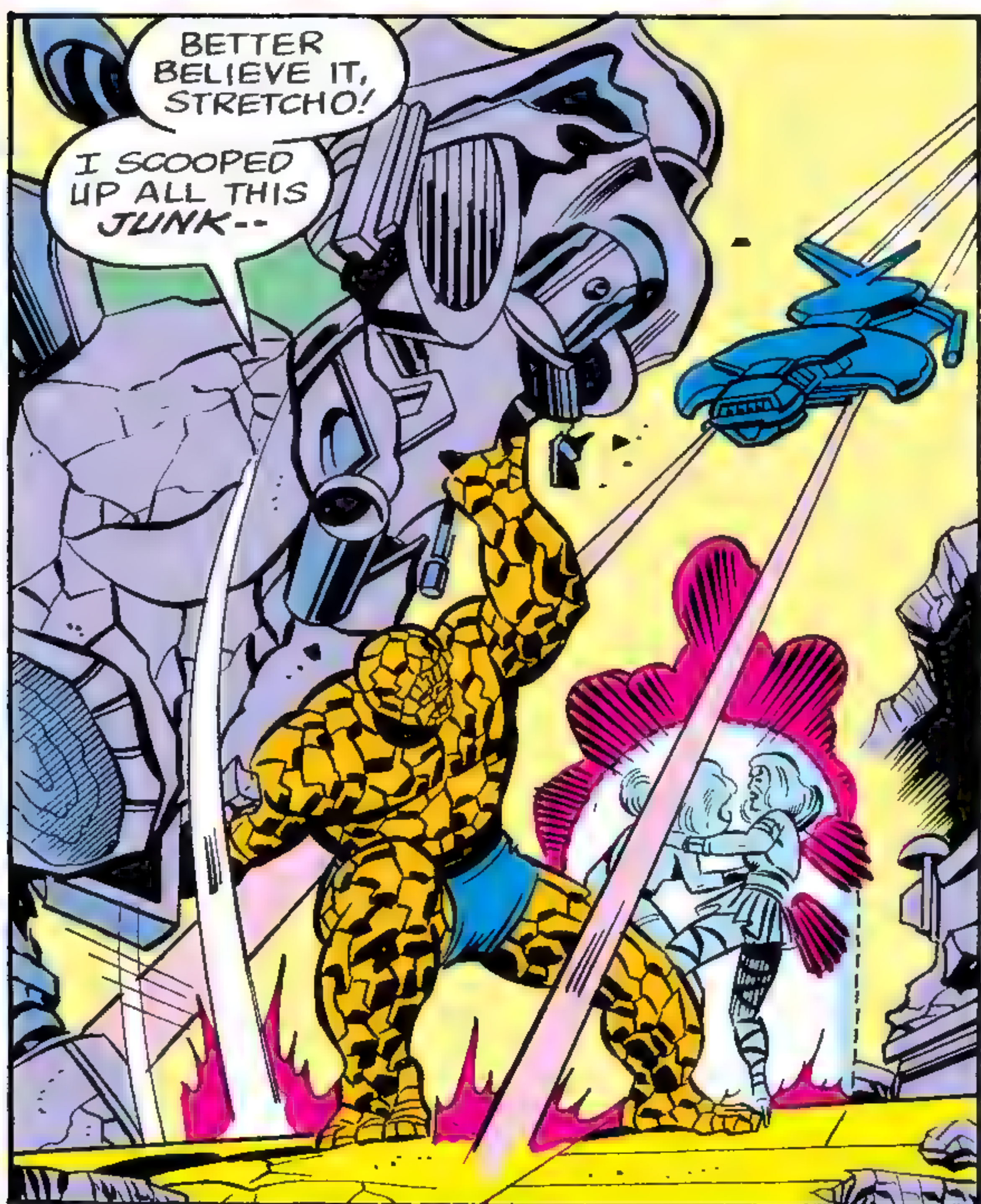
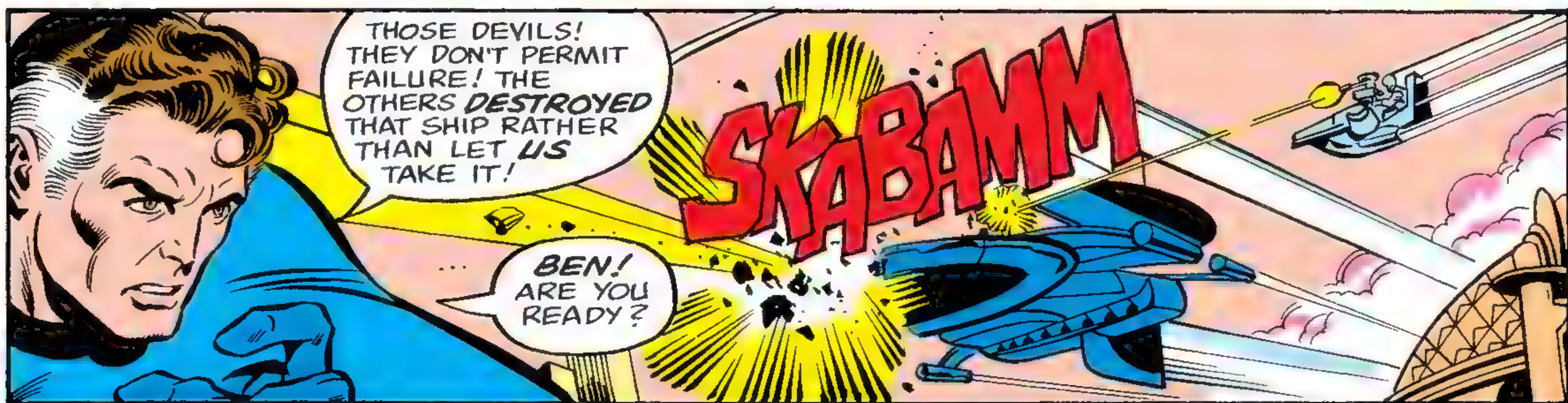
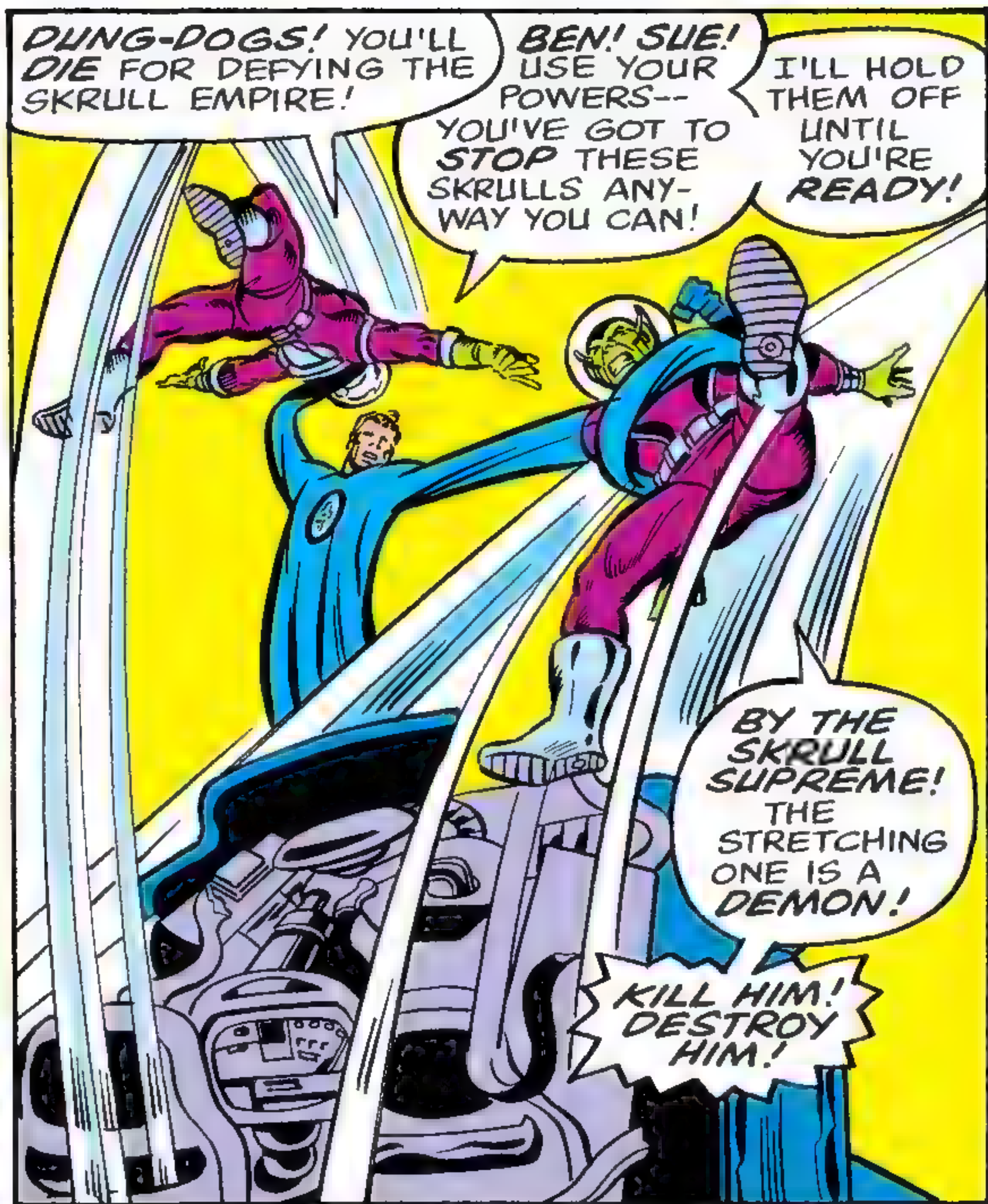
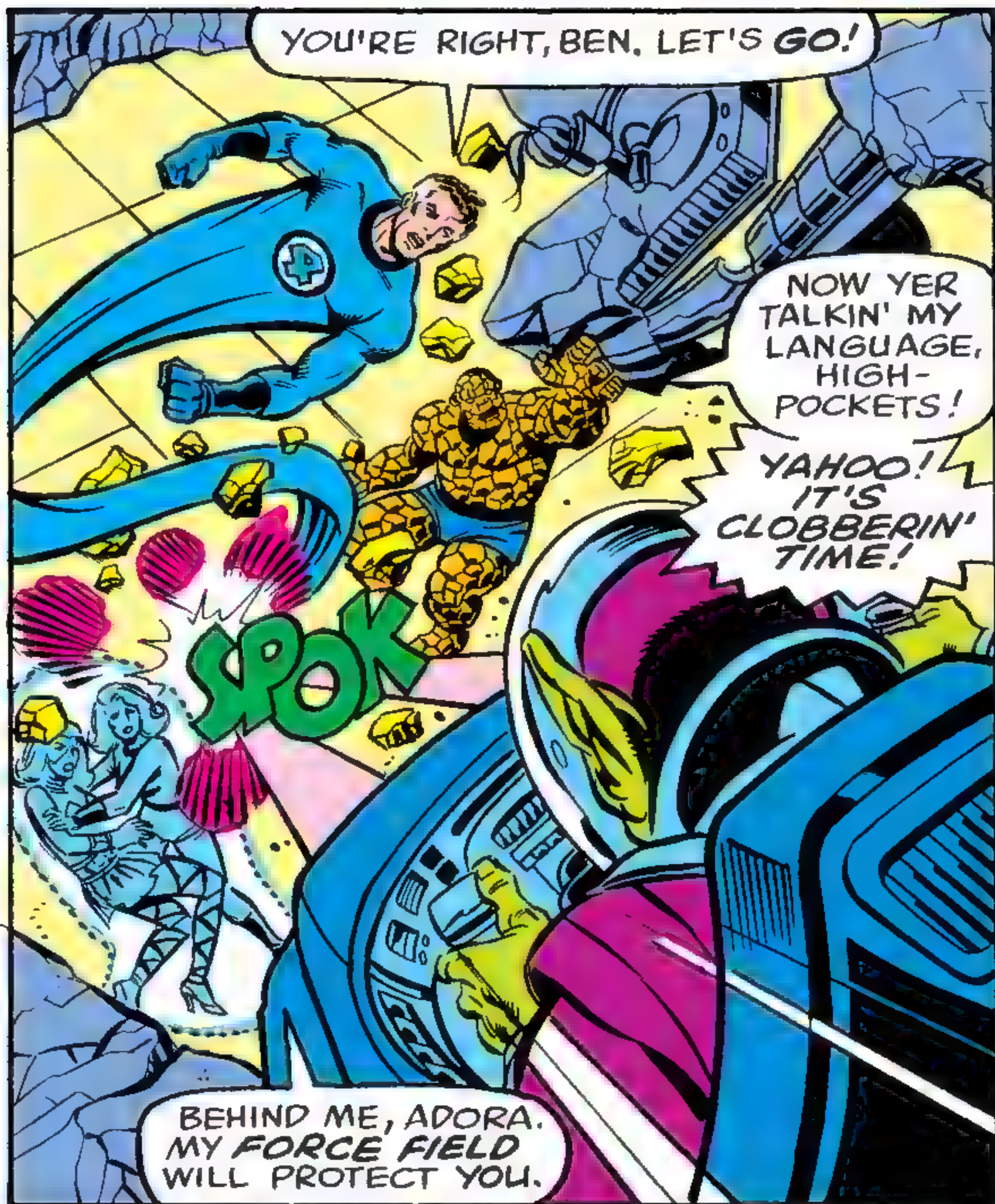
THE SKRULL FLIERS COME FROM NOWHERE! THEIR SPEED IS INCREDIBLE! THE ENGINES CAPABLE OF SUCH POWER MUST DEFY DESCRIPTION!

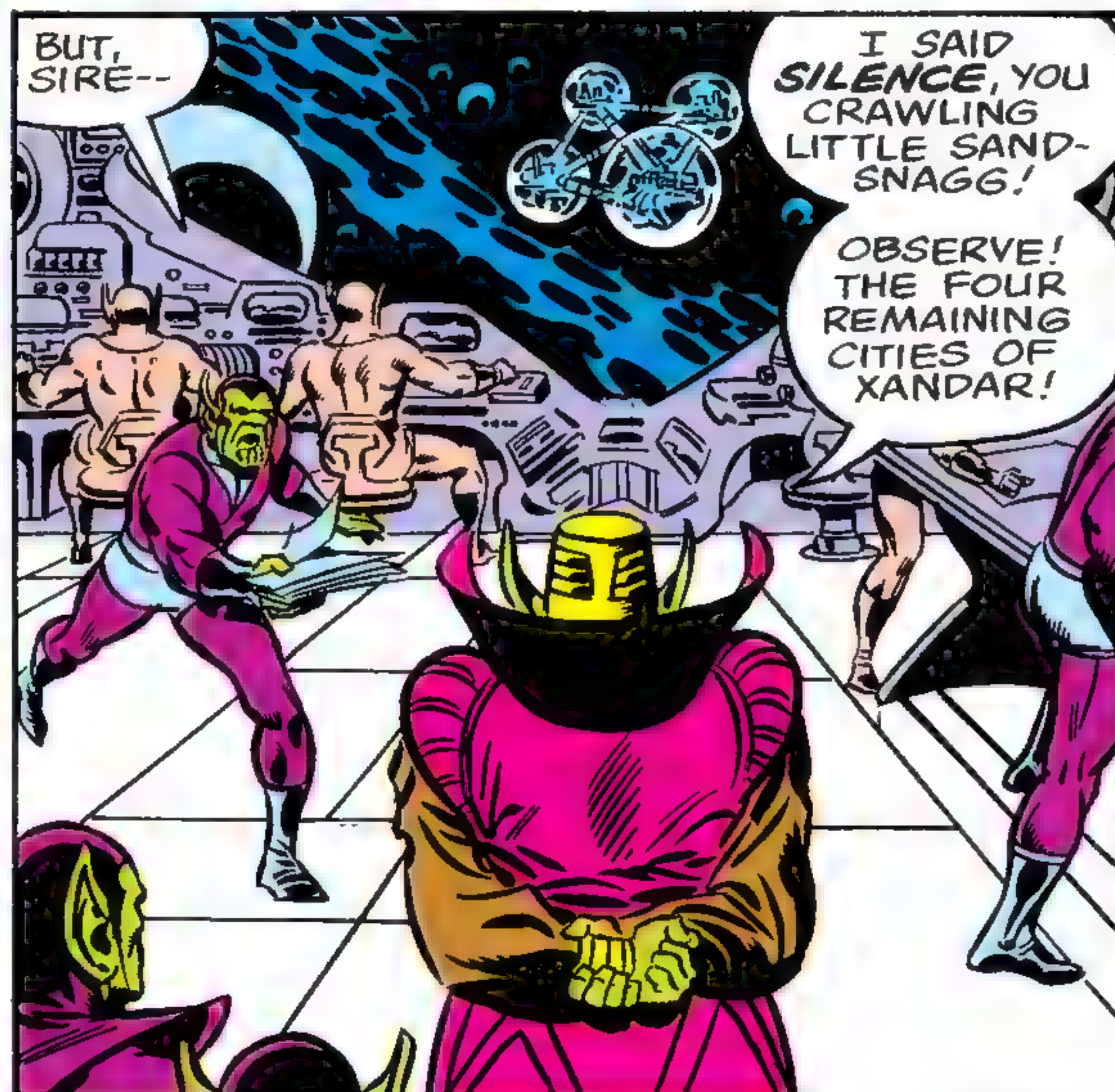
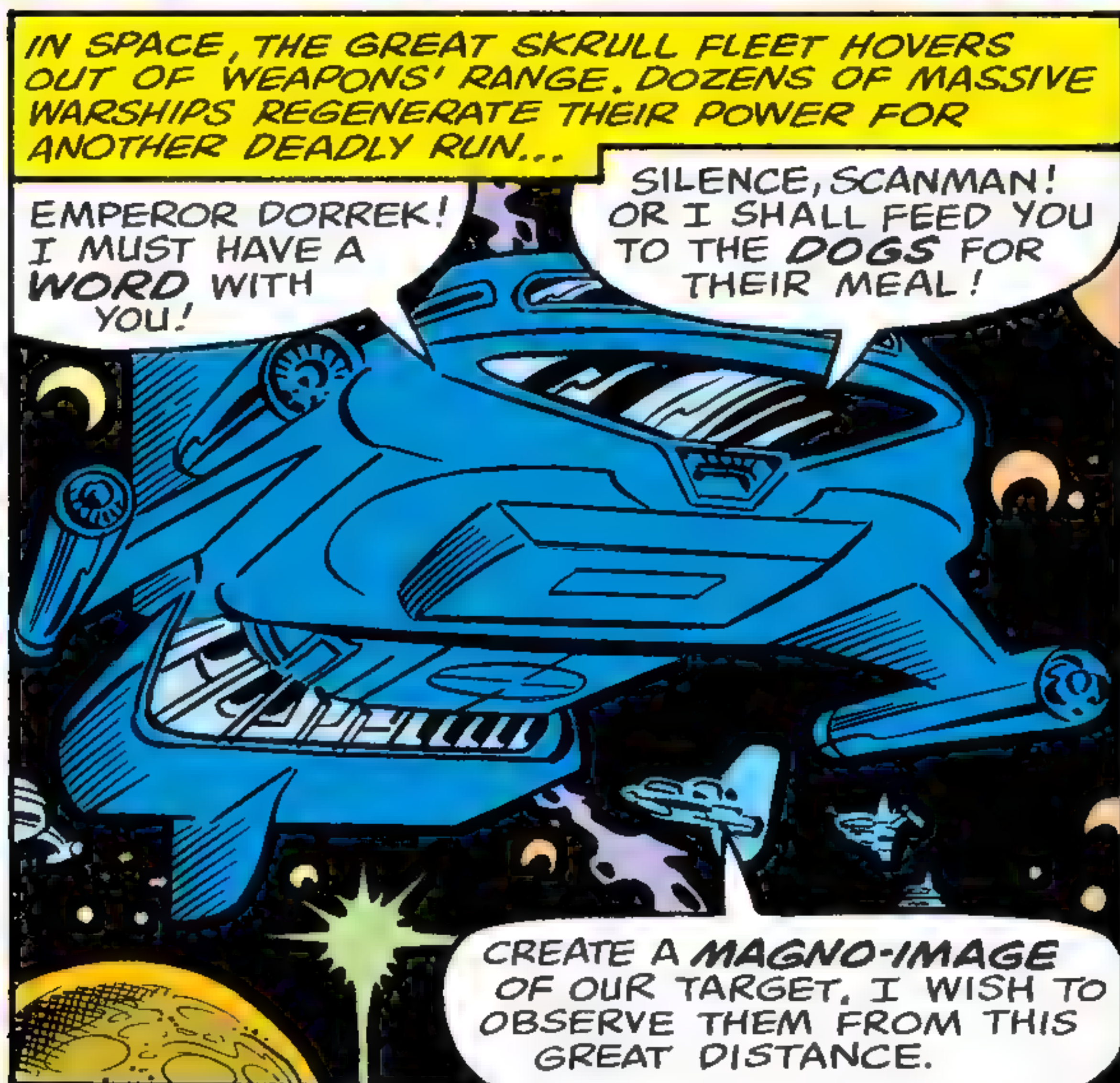
STRETCHO, WHILE YER WORRYIN' OVER SOME COCKAMAMIE MOTOR, THOSE BLASTED SKRULLS ARE TEARIN' APART THIS WORLD!

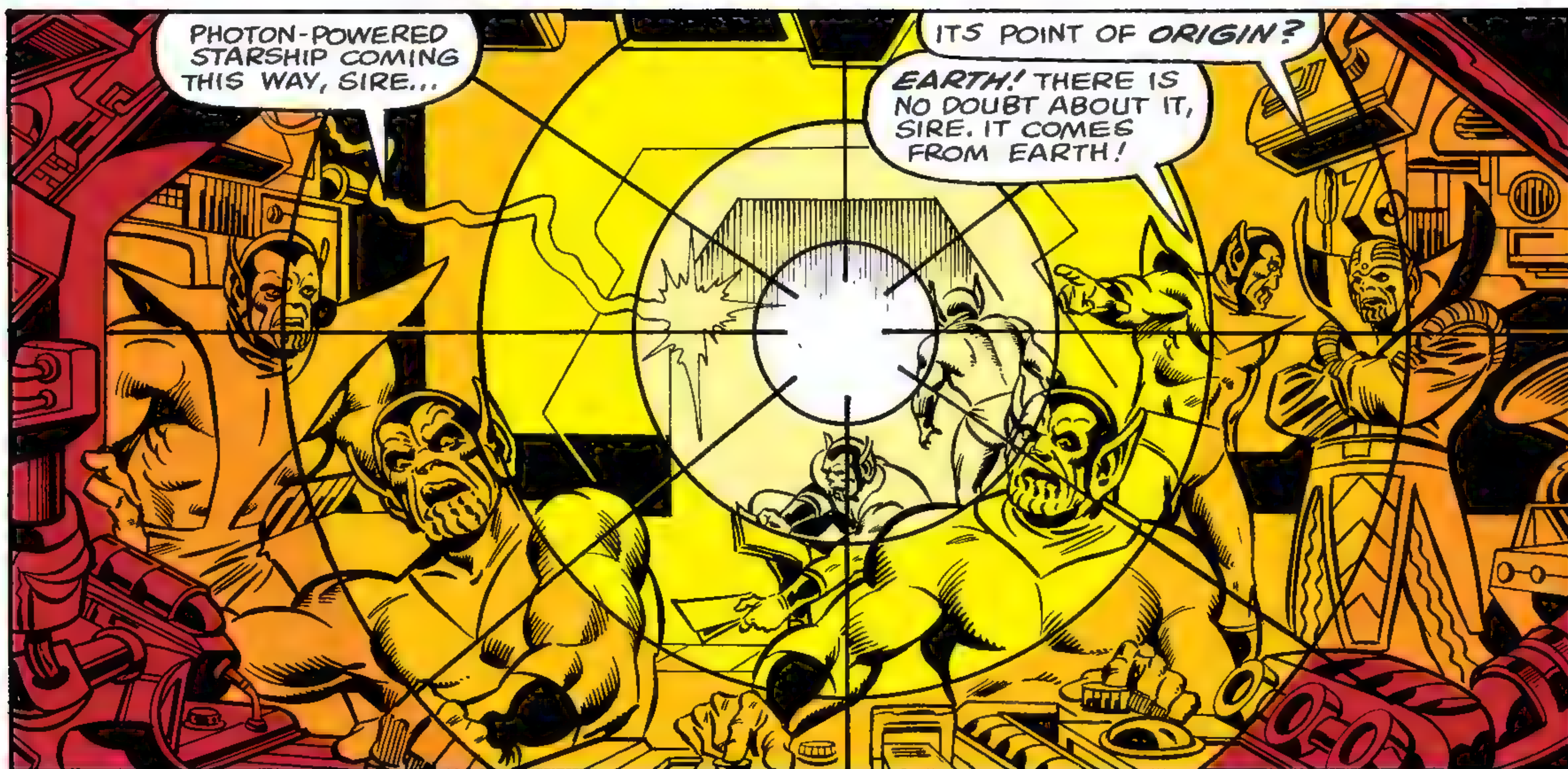
WE GOTTA DO SOMETHIN'!

MY BEAUTIFUL WORLD... RAVAGED, RUINED... SUCH WASTE... SUCH UTTER WASTE.

EVERYWHERE THE EYE CAN SEE THERE IS NIGHTMARISH RUIN FOLLOWED BY A TREMULOUS CRYING NOT EVEN THE COLDEST OF SOULS COULD LONG IGNORE.







PHOTON-POWERED
STARSHIP COMING
THIS WAY, SIRE...

ITS POINT OF ORIGIN?

EARTH! THERE IS
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT,
SIRE. IT COMES
FROM EARTH!



BY THE SARGASSOS
OF SIRIUS! THE
EARTHLINGS HAVEN'T
THE TECHNOLOGY TO
TRAVEL THIS FAR IN
SPACE! HOW DO
THEY DO IT?
HOW?!?

BAH! NEVER
MIND THE HOW
--I WANT THEM
ELIMINATED!



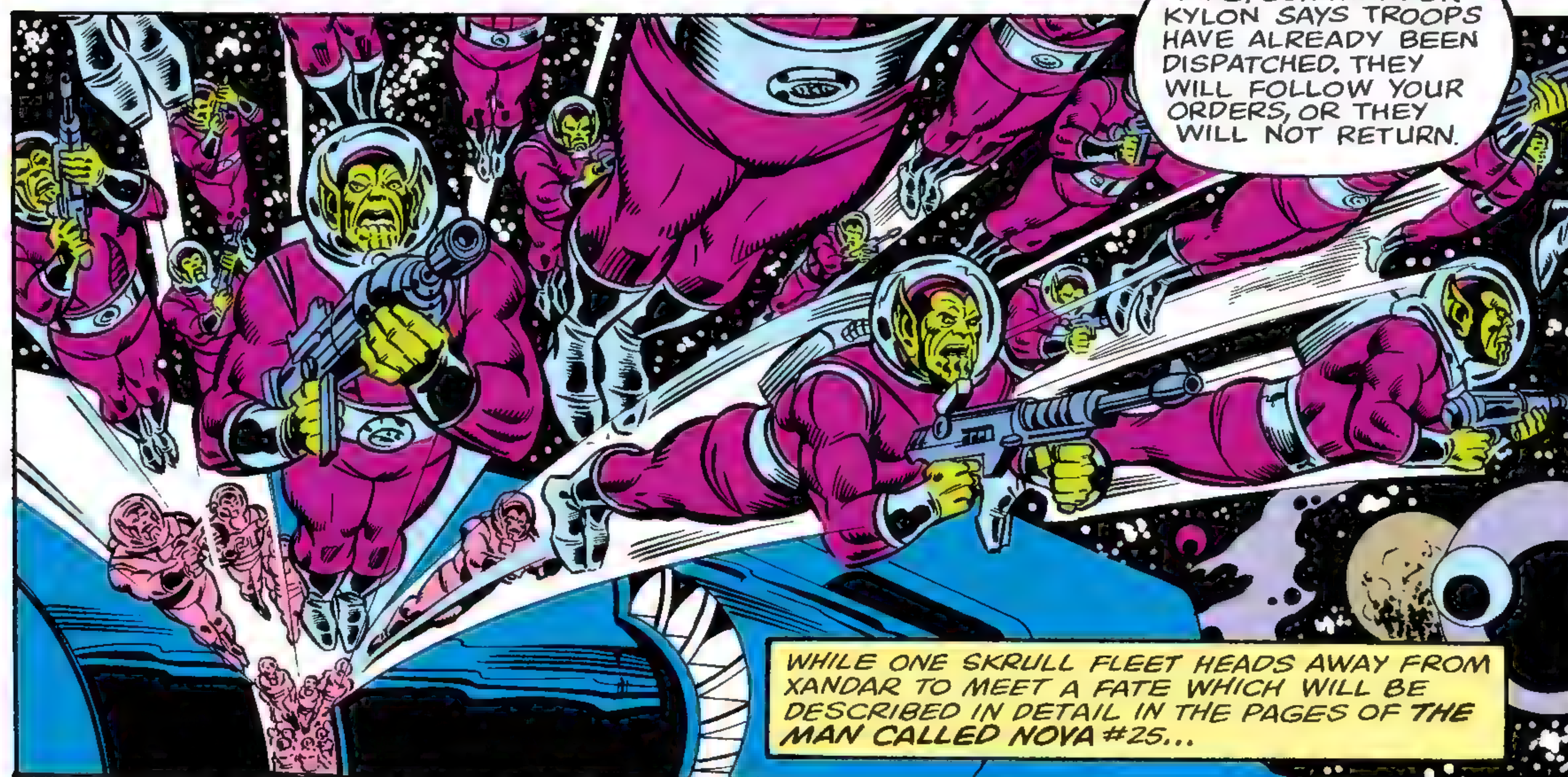
DREXXON, NOTIFY
COMMANDER
KYLON, I WANT
A SQUADRON
OF WARSHIPS
TO LEAVE HERE
IMMEDIATELY!

THEY ARE TO
INTERCEPT
THE EARTH-
LINGS. THEY
ARE TO
DESTROY
THEM!



I AM NOT INTERESTED IN
WHO IS ABOARD THAT SHIP,
OR EVEN WHY. I WANT THEM
OUT OF MY SCANNER RANGE.

IS THAT
UNDER-
STOOD?



SIRE, COMMANDER
KYLON SAYS TROOPS
HAVE ALREADY BEEN
DISPATCHED. THEY
WILL FOLLOW YOUR
ORDERS, OR THEY
WILL NOT RETURN.

WHILE ONE SKRULL FLEET HEADS AWAY FROM
XANDAR TO MEET A FATE WHICH WILL BE
DESCRIBED IN DETAIL IN THE PAGES OF THE
MAN CALLED NOVA #25...

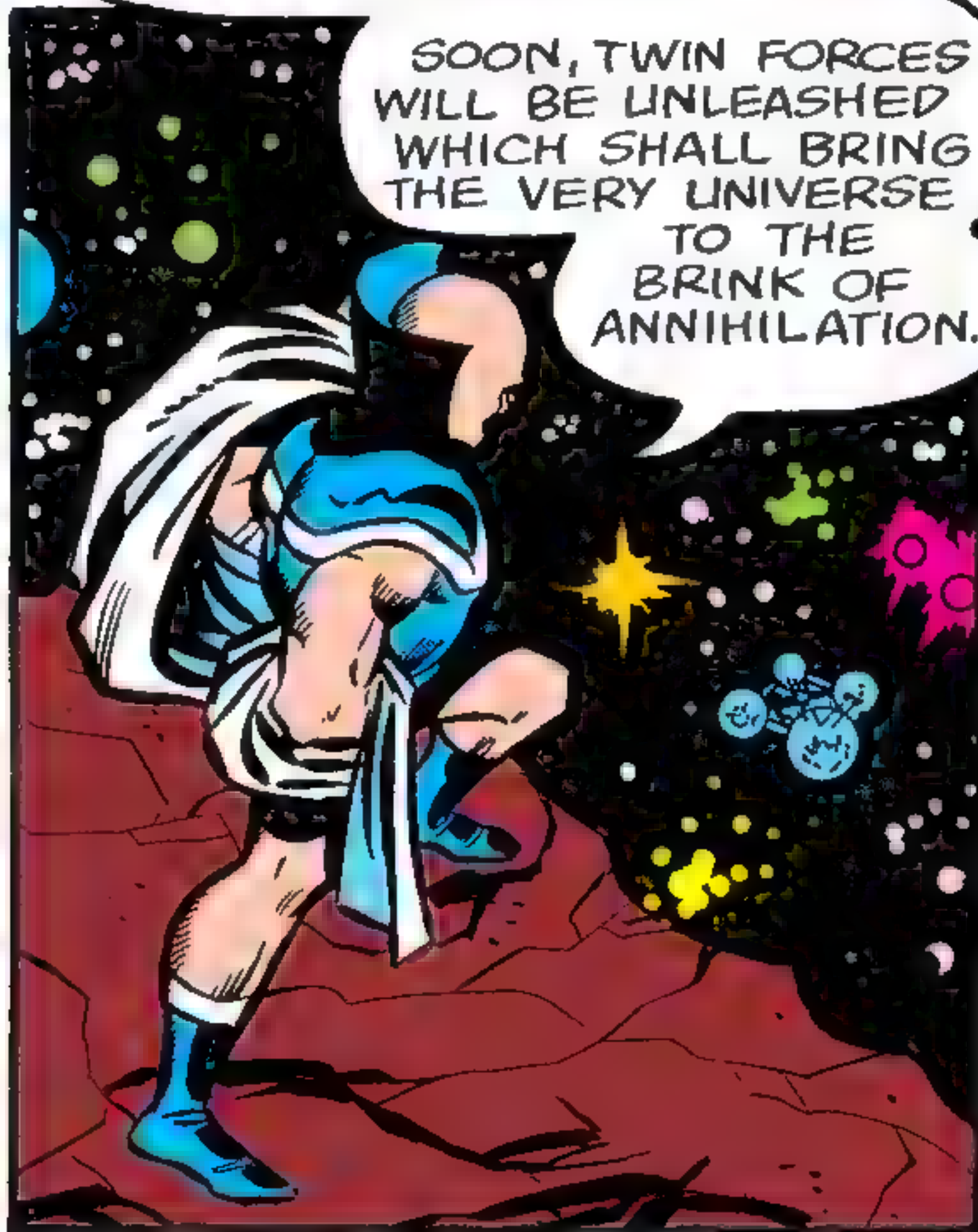
...WE FOCUS OUR ATTENTIONS ON A SILENT, GRIM-FACED FIGURE WHO PAUSES MOODILY, HIS EVER-OBSERVANT GAZE RIVETED ON A FOUR-SECTIONED WORLD WHICH HE HELPED TO CREATE...

ONCE AGAIN I HAD VIOLATED MY OATH.



YET, THERE WAS NO CHOICE-- THE INTERVENTION OF THE SKRULLS FORCED MY HAND.

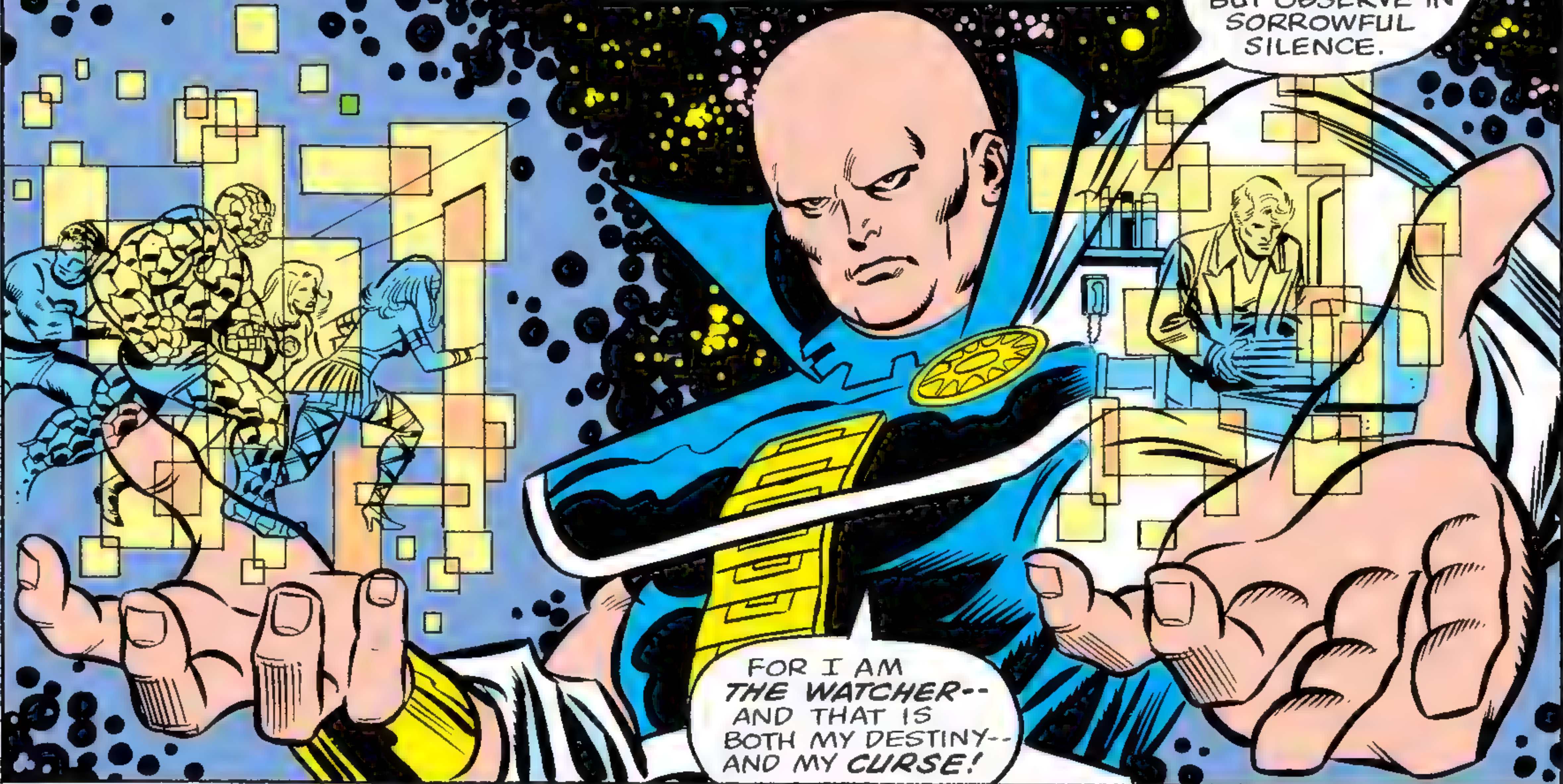
SOON, TWIN FORCES WILL BE UNLEASHED WHICH SHALL BRING THE VERY UNIVERSE TO THE BRINK OF ANNIHILATION.



AND WHAT IS MANKIND'S SOLE HOPE? ON ONE HAND, THREE COMPARATIVELY INCONSPICUOUS MORTALS WHO MERELY SEEK ONE PLANET'S SALVATION.

ON THE OTHER HAND, A LONELY YOUTH WHO MUST FACE HIS OWN MORTALITY BEFORE VOYAGING ON THE ENDLESS COSMIC SEAS.

AND ALL THE WHILE THE GALAXY DIES, I CAN DO NOTHING BUT OBSERVE IN SORROWFUL SILENCE.



FOR I AM THE WATCHER-- AND THAT IS BOTH MY DESTINY-- AND MY CURSE!

IN LAINESVILLE, NEW YORK, A SMALL SUBURBAN COMMUNITY, THERE STANDS A GUARDED COMPLEX KNOWN AS SECURITY UNIVERSITY.

THIS IS WHERE THE RICH, THE FAMOUS, THE SO-CALLED IMPORTANT PEOPLE SEND THEIR OFFSPRING TO COMPLETE THEIR COLLEGE EDUCATION...

...WITHOUT FEAR OF DANGER.



AND IT IS TO THIS CAMPUS THAT JOHNNY STORM HAS COME TO COMPLETE HIS HIGHER LEARNING...

I MADE THE CORRECT CHOICE, I'M SURE OF IT NOW.

ON ANY OTHER CAMPUS I'D BE LOOKED ON AS SOMETHING SPECIAL--

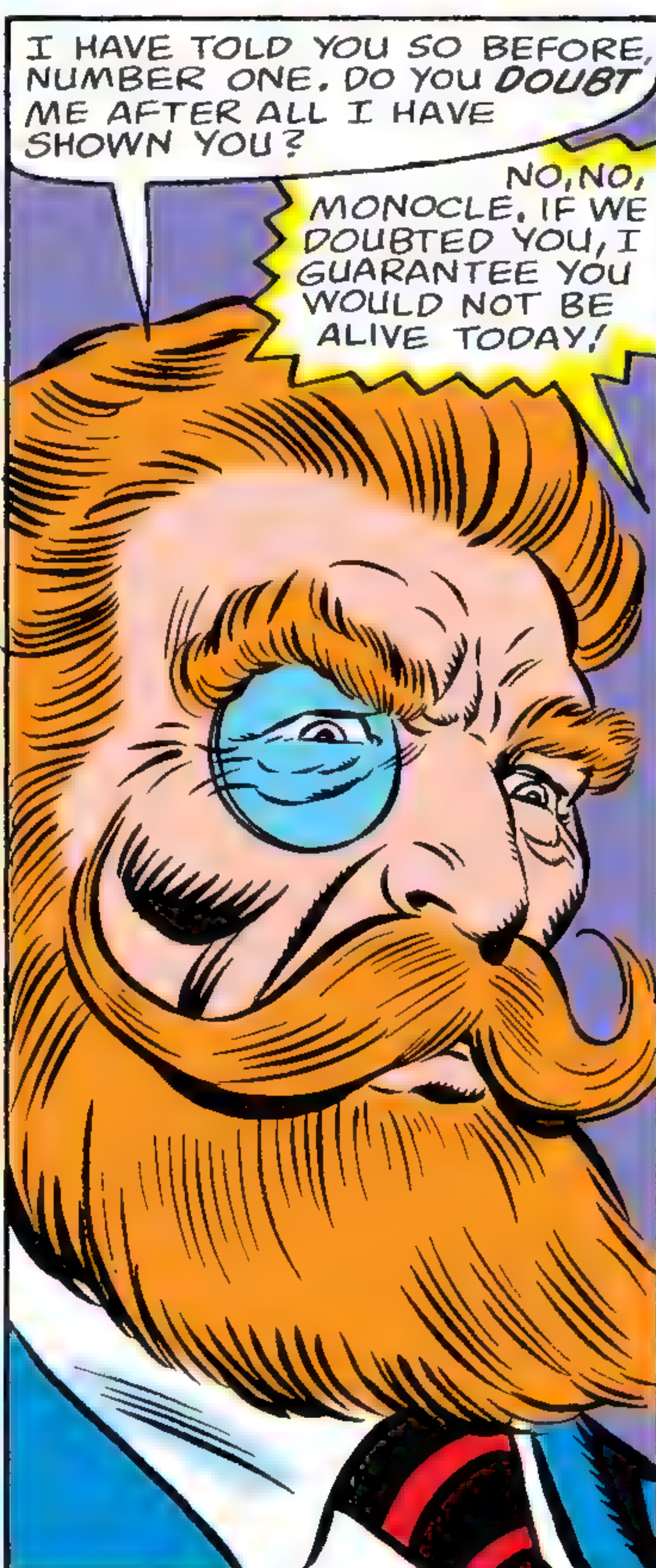
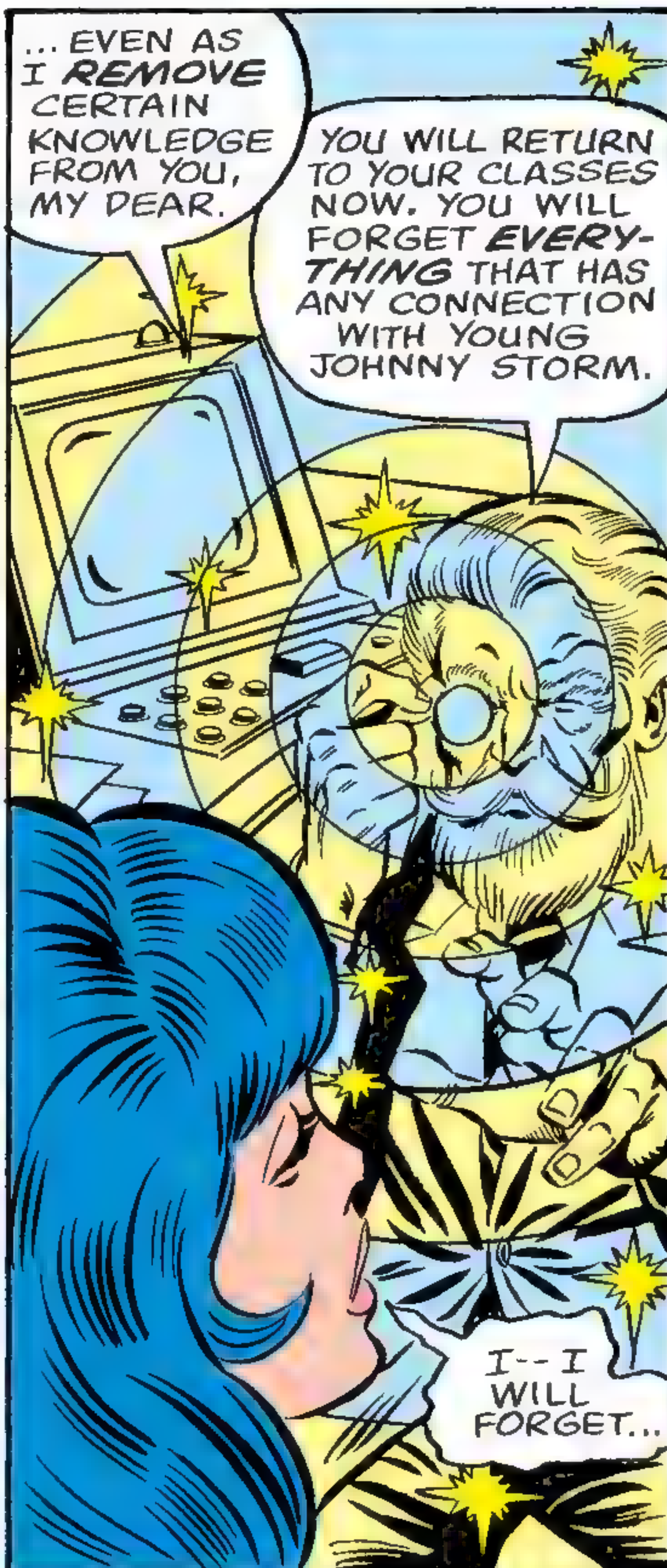
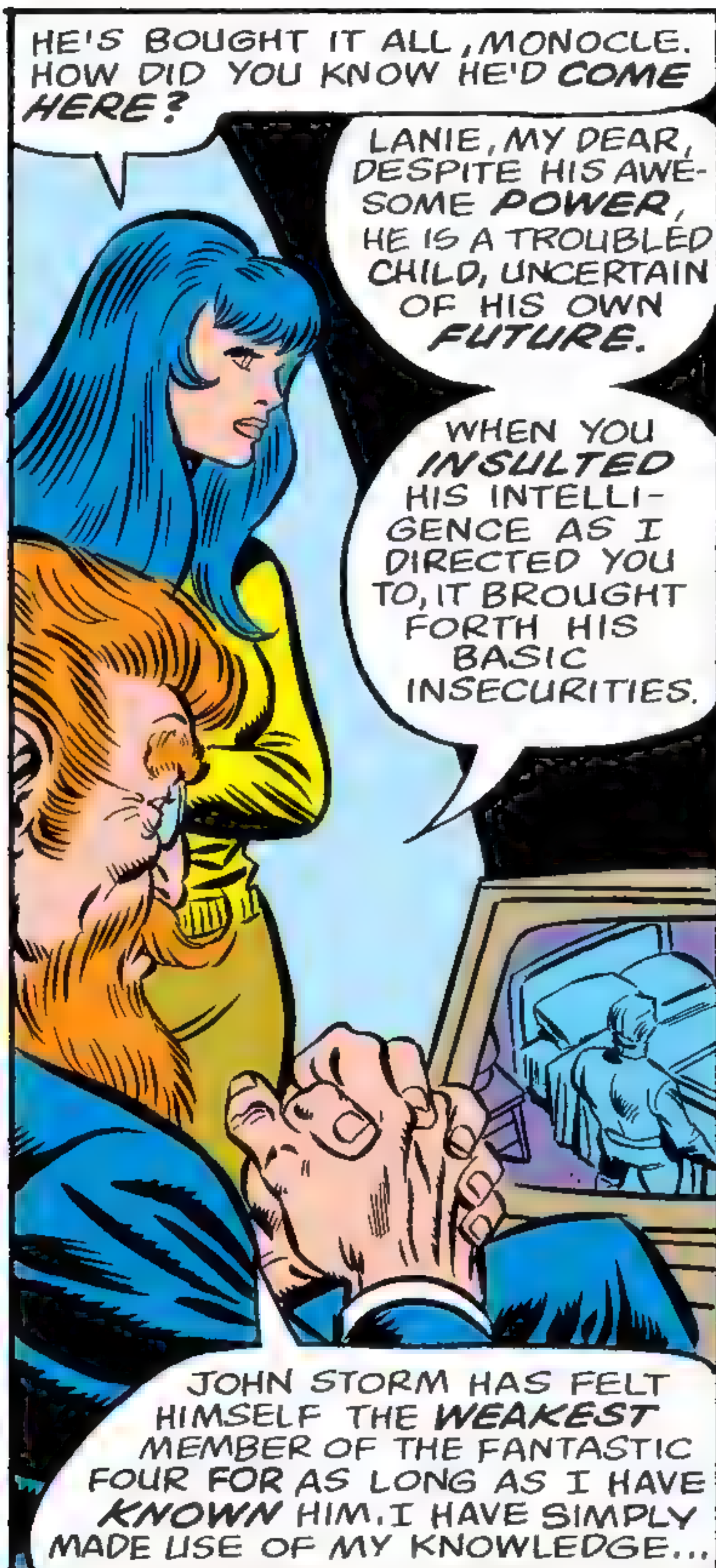
-- ONLY HERE DO I FIT LIKE THE PROVERBIAL GLOVE!



NOT EVEN THE SECURITY CAMERAS BOTHER ME.



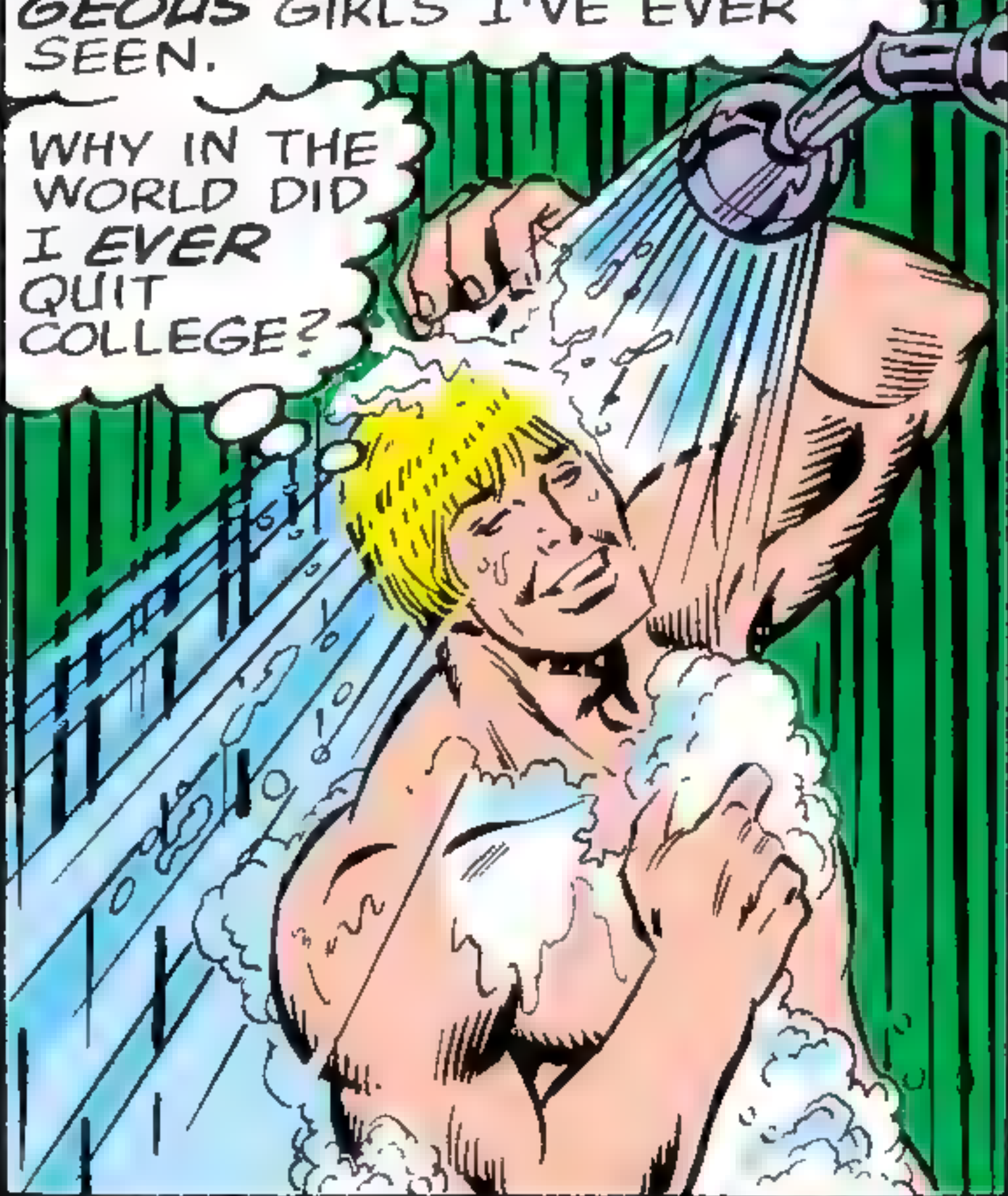
THEY'RE HERE FOR OUR SECURITY -- TO MAKE SURE WE'LL ALL BE SAFE!



MEANWHILE, WHAT OF THE
LUNWARY JOHNNY STORM...?

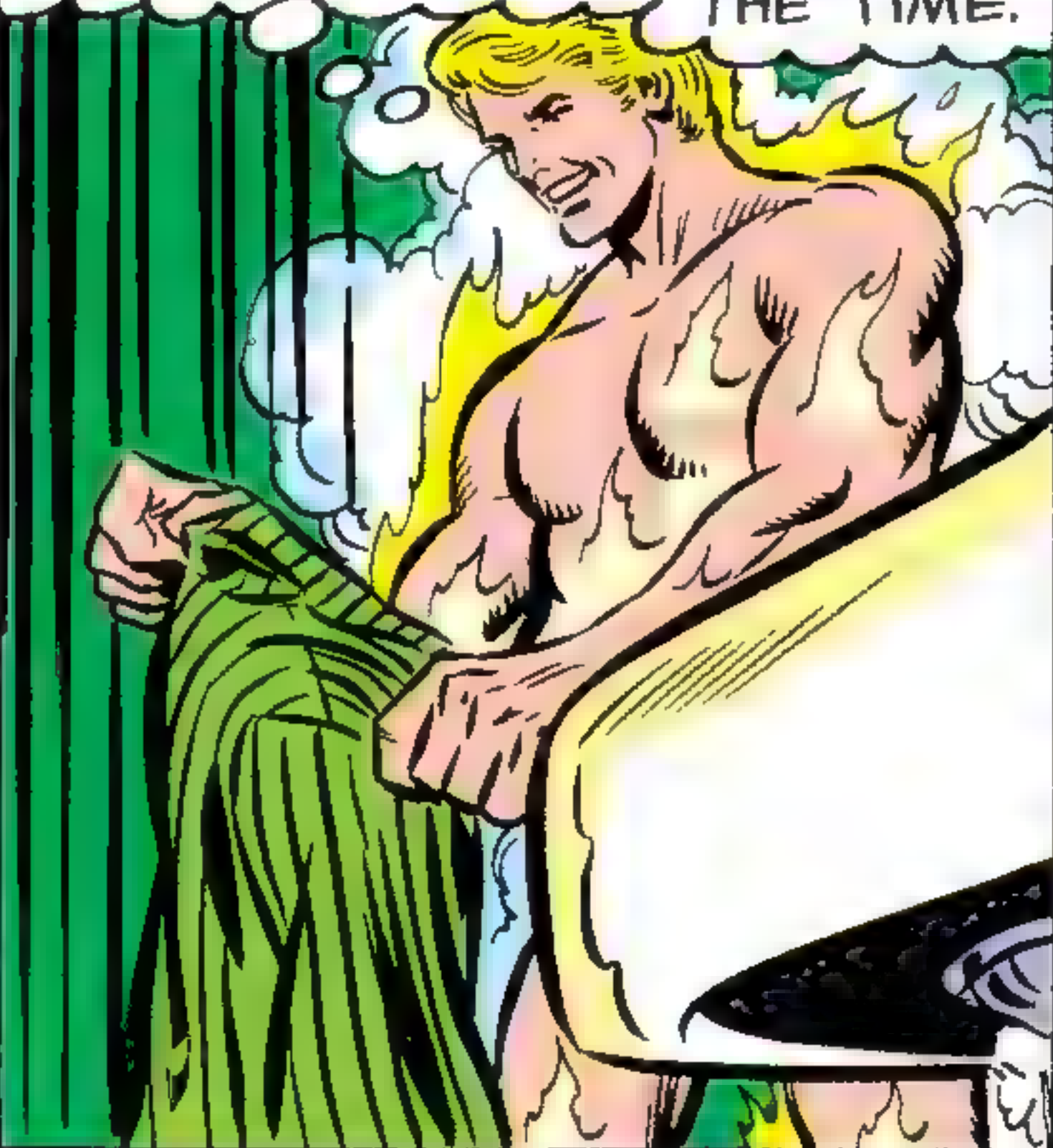
THIS IS THE LIFE. THIS PLACE
HAS ITS OWN SWIMMING POOL,
SAUNA, AND THE MOST GOR-
GEOUS GIRLS I'VE EVER
SEEN.

WHY IN THE
WORLD DID
I EVER
QUIT
COLLEGE?

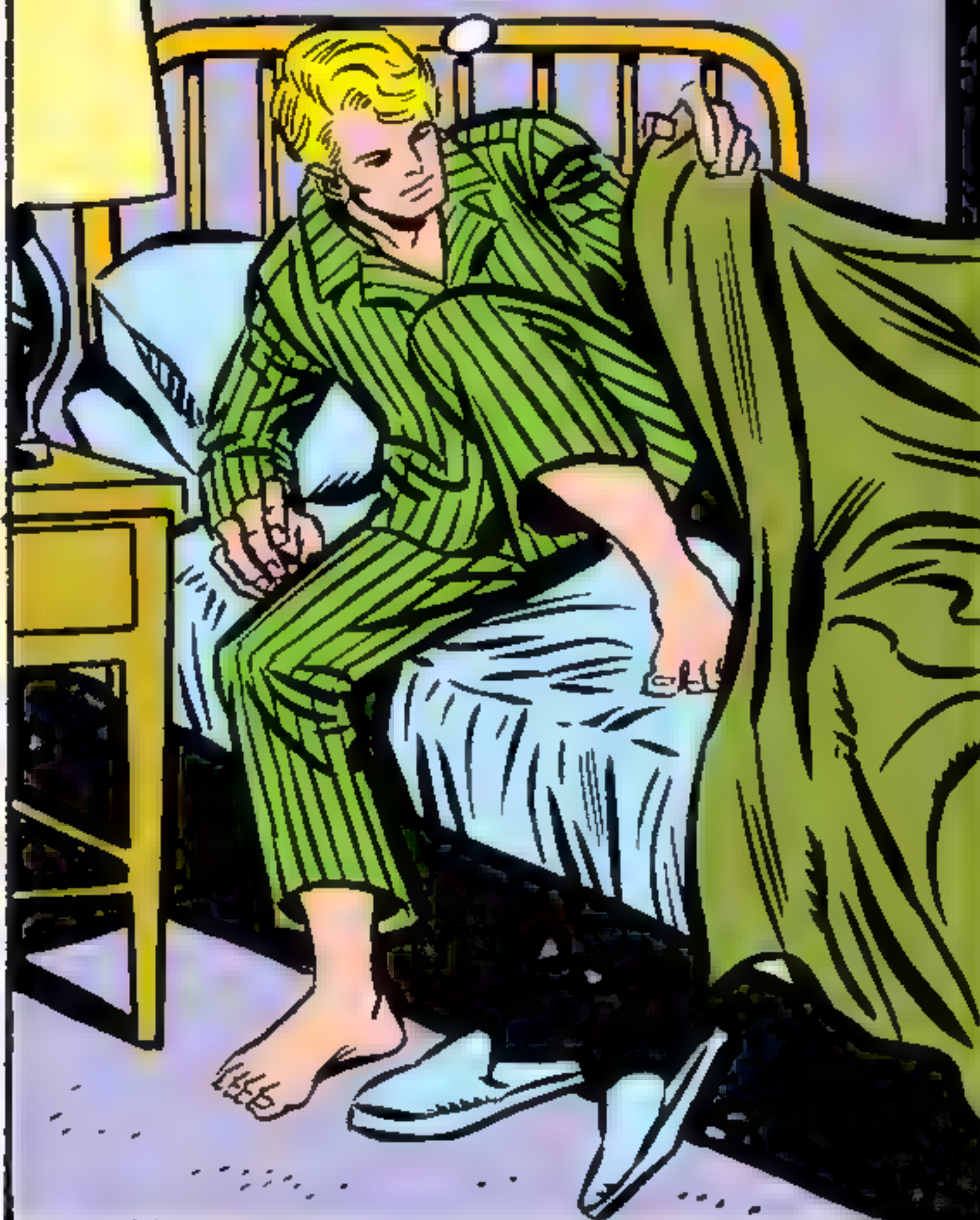


JOHNNY STEPS FROM THE
SHOWER, INCREASING HIS
INTERNAL TEMPERATURE
TO INSTANTLY DRY HIM OFF...

BESIDES, I THINK GOING BACK
TO SCHOOL WILL DO WONDERS
FOR ME... I WON'T FEEL LIKE
THE F.F.'S PRIZE DUMMY ALL
THE TIME.



WELL, CLASSES BEGIN
TOMORROW, SO I'D BETTER
GET A GOOD NIGHT'S
SLEEP--



MMM MMMM...
WONDER WHAT
REED AND THE
OTHERS ARE
DOING RIGHT
ABOUT NOW?

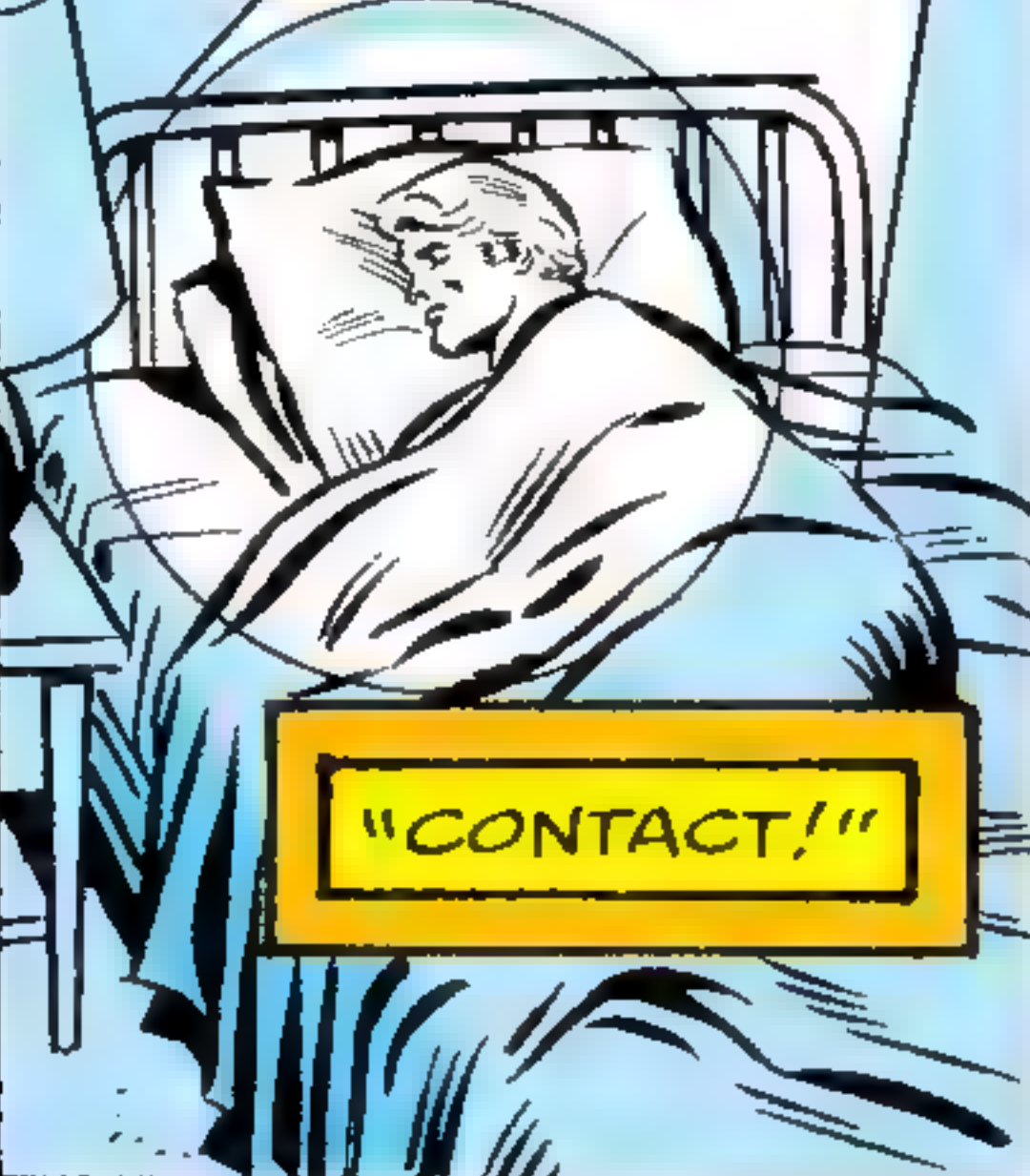
AS HIS HEAD
HITS THE PILLOW,
JOHNNY FALLS
ASLEEP...



HALF AN HOUR
PASSES--

-- THEN...

"CONTACT!"



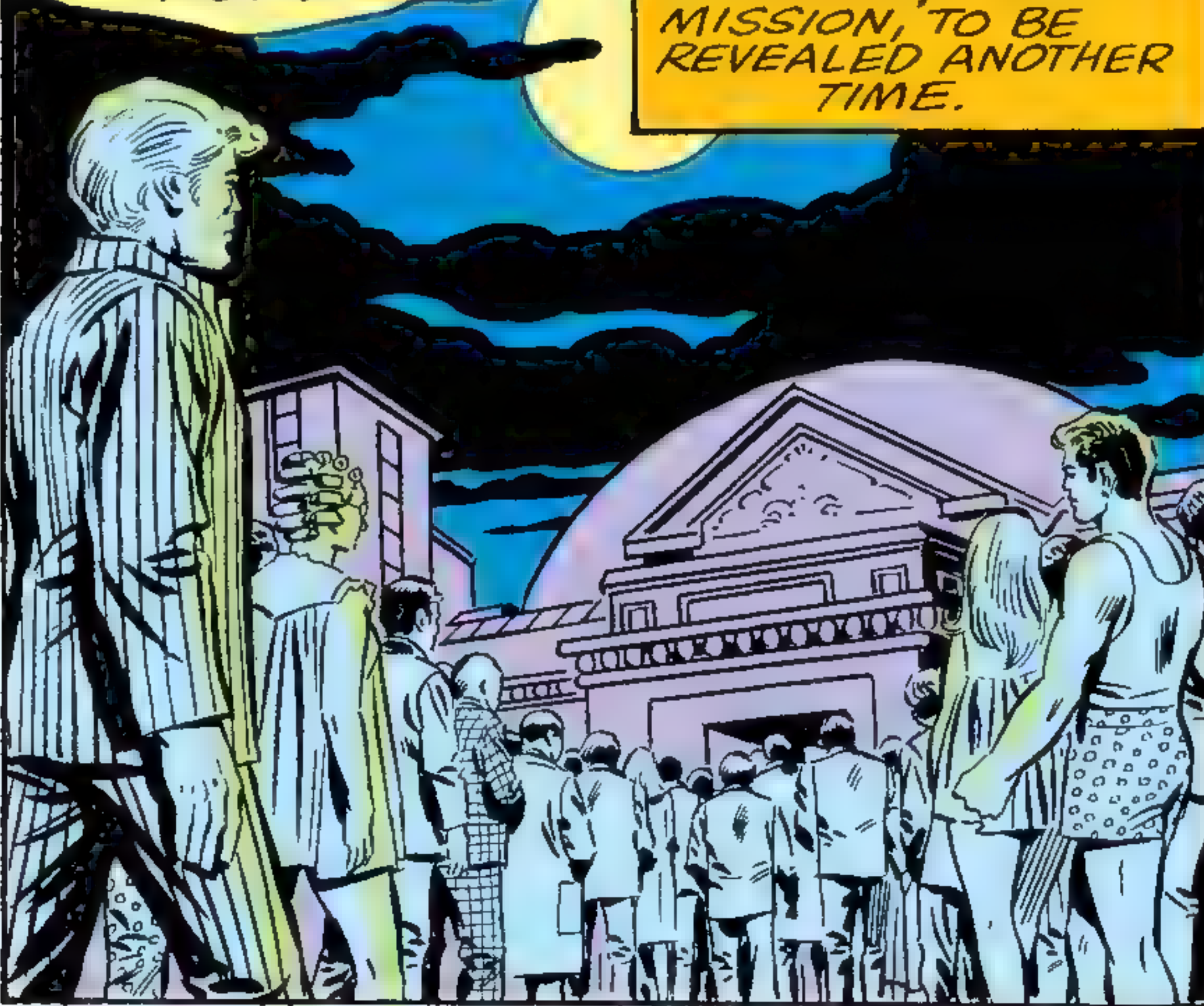
YOU WILL NOW STAND
UP, JOHN STORM.
YOU WILL LISTEN TO
MY EVERY COMMAND.



YOU ARE IN OUR CON-
TROL. YOU WILL MAKE
NO EFFORT TO FREE
YOURSELF. YOU WILL
OBEY MY EVERY
WORD.



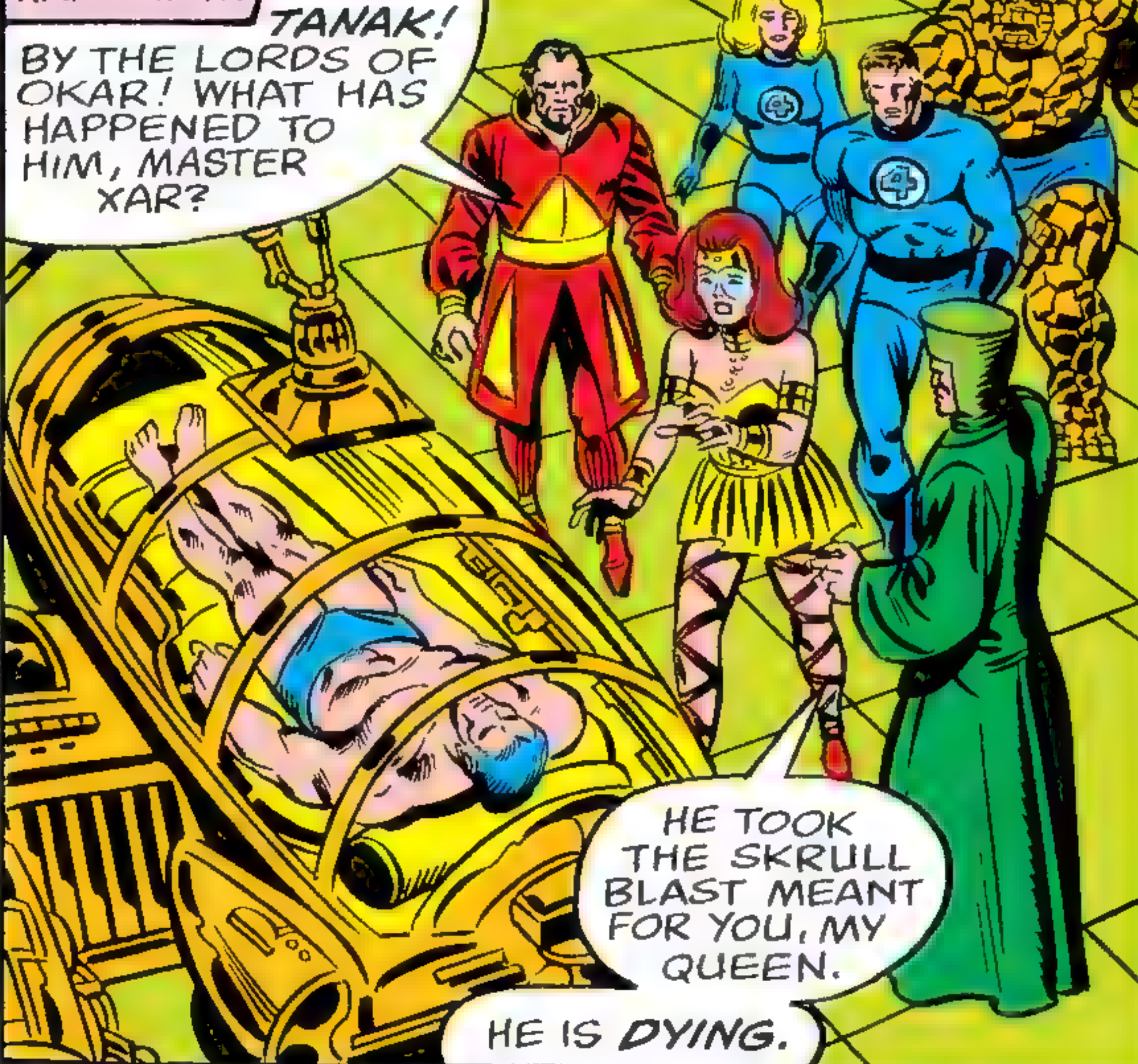
JOIN WITH THE OTHERS.
HEAD TOWARD THE
ADMINISTRATION BUILD-
ING. DO WHAT I SAY--
NOW!



MINDLESSLY, JOHNNY
FALLS IN LINE WITH
HUNDREDS OF OTHER
SOMNAMBULISTIC
STUDENTS, THEIR
MISSION, TO BE
REVEALED ANOTHER
TIME.

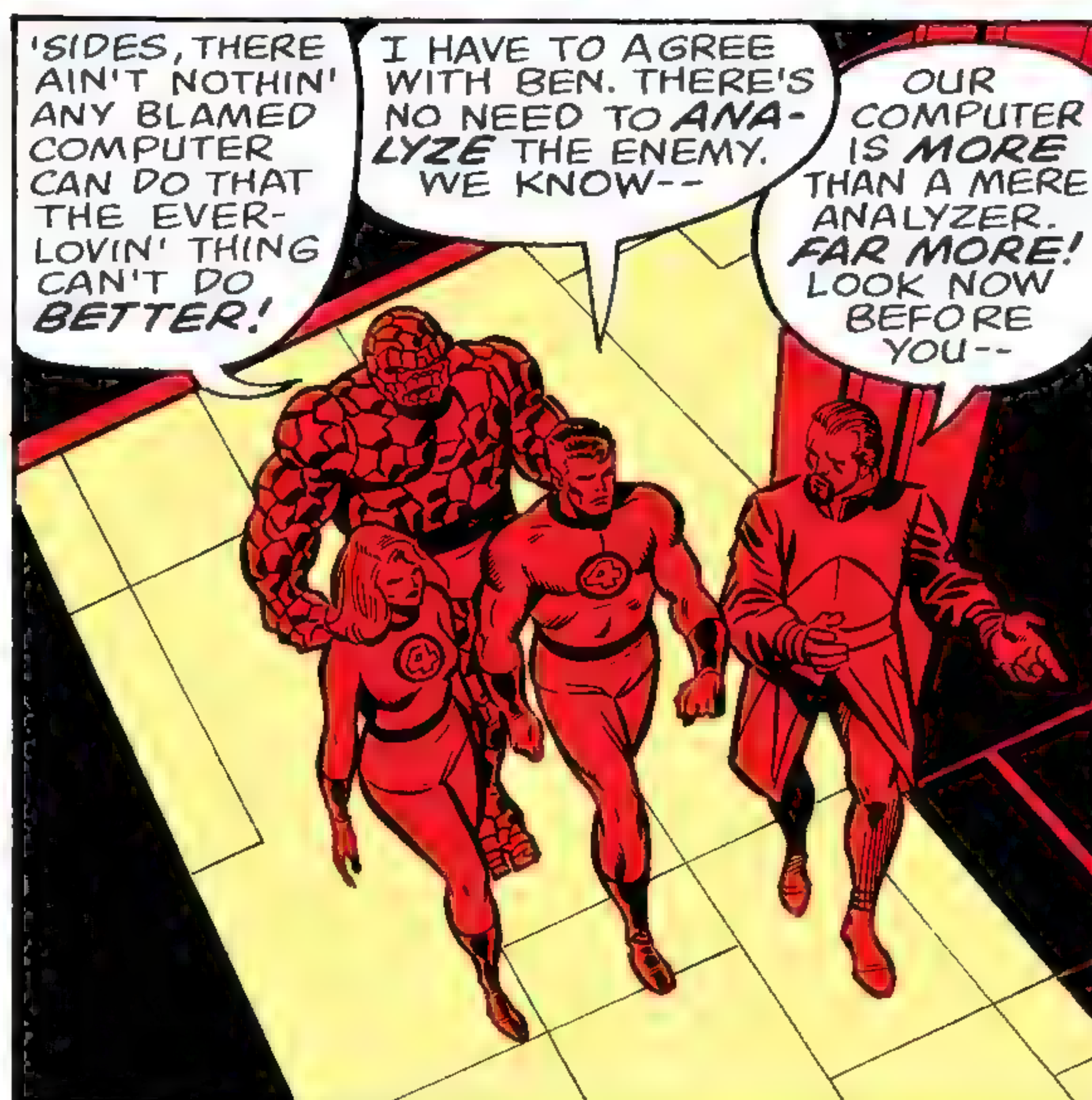
FOR NOW, WE MUST RETURN TO THE PLANET
XANDAR...

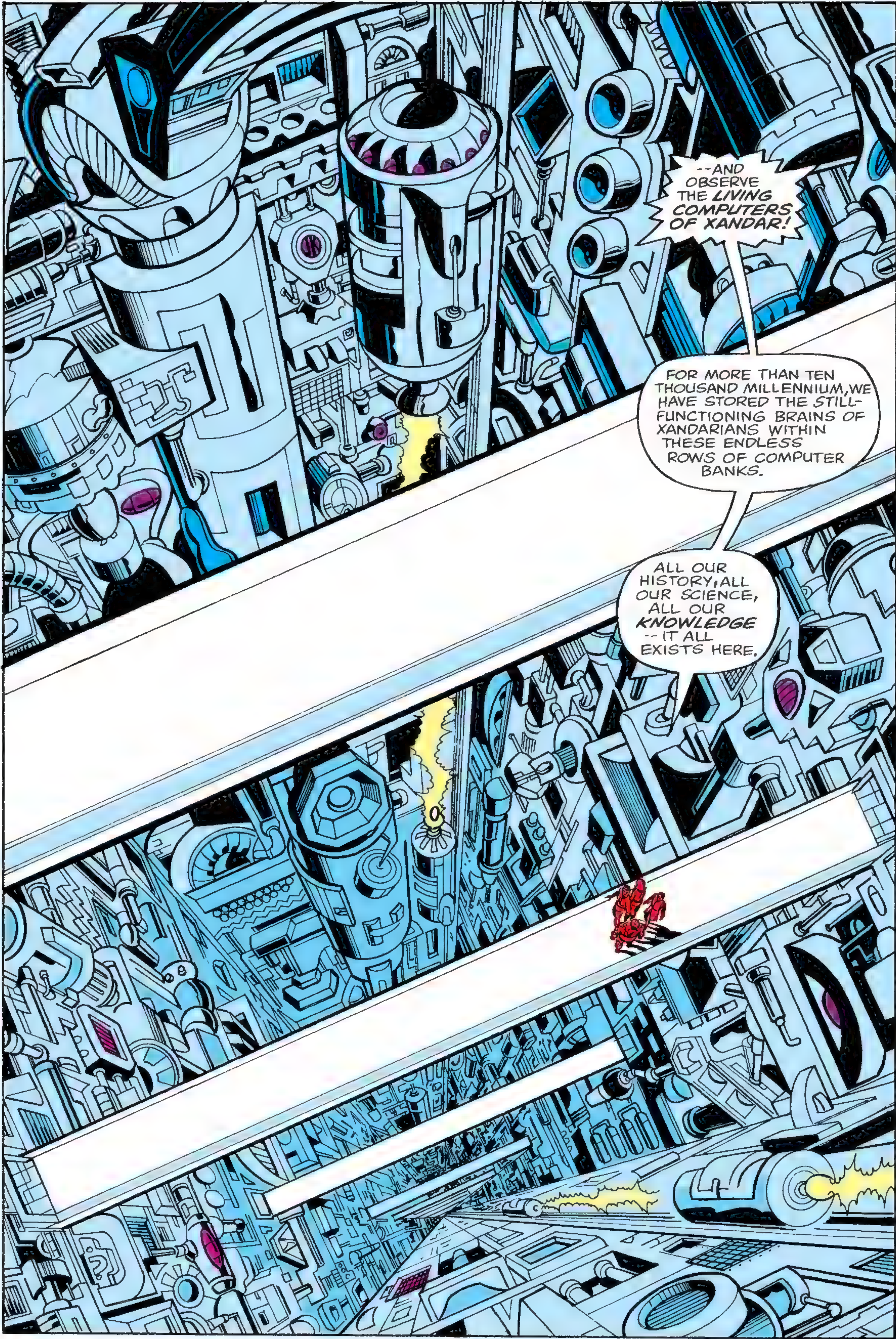
TANAK!
BY THE LORDS OF
OKAR! WHAT HAS
HAPPENED TO
HIM, MASTER
XAR?



HE TOOK
THE SKRULL
BLAST MEANT
FOR YOU, MY
QUEEN.

HE IS DYING.





--AND
OBSERVE
THE **LIVING**
COMPUTERS
OF XANDAR!

FOR MORE THAN TEN
THOUSAND MILLENNIUM, WE
HAVE STORED THE STILL-
FUNCTIONING BRAINS OF
XANDARIANS WITHIN
THESE ENDLESS
ROWS OF COMPUTER
BANKS.

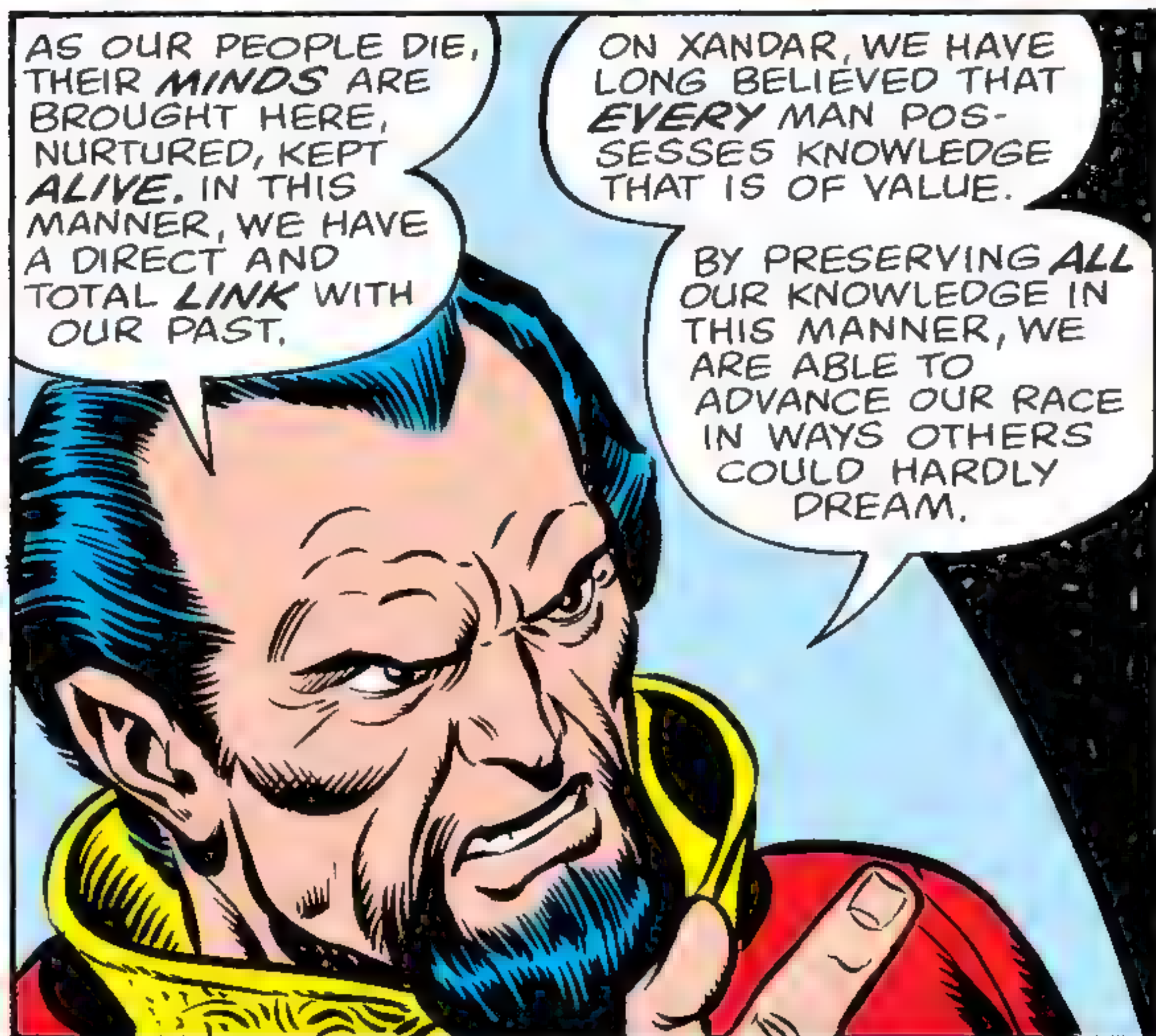
ALL OUR
HISTORY, ALL
OUR SCIENCE,
ALL OUR
KNOWLEDGE
-- IT ALL
EXISTS HERE.



THIS IS THE MOST
ADVANCED COMPUTER
NETWORK I'VE EVER
SEEN!

REED!! IT
DEFIES
DESCRIPTION!

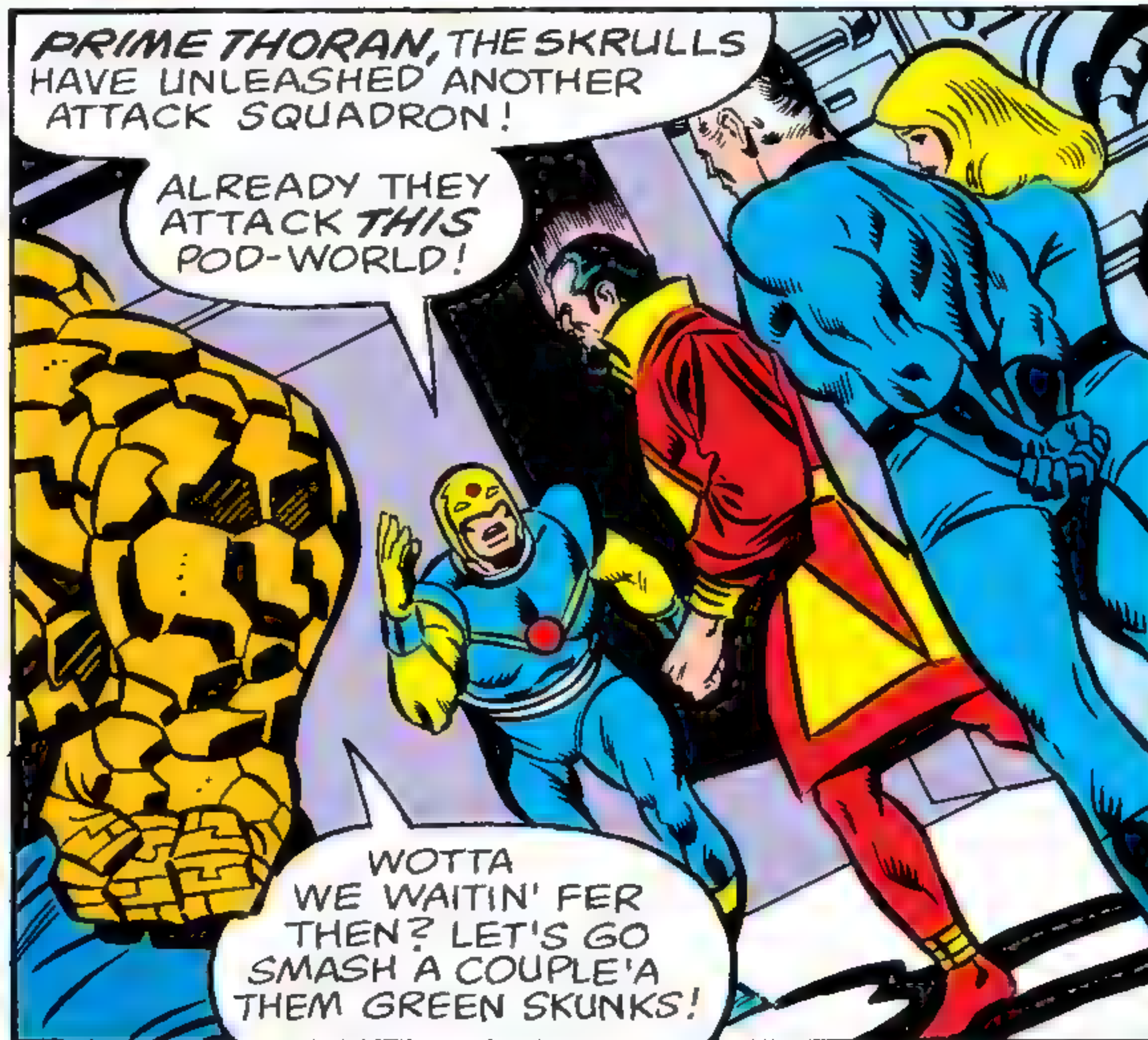
BAH! I'VE SEEN
BETTER IN
"FORBIDDEN
PLANET!"



AS OUR PEOPLE DIE,
THEIR **MINDS** ARE
BROUGHT HERE,
NURTURED, KEPT
ALIVE. IN THIS
MANNER, WE HAVE
A DIRECT AND
TOTAL **LINK** WITH
OUR PAST.

ON XANDAR, WE HAVE
LONG BELIEVED THAT
EVERY MAN POS-
SESSES KNOWLEDGE
THAT IS OF VALUE.

BY PRESERVING **ALL**
OUR KNOWLEDGE IN
THIS MANNER, WE
ARE ABLE TO
ADVANCE OUR RACE
IN WAYS OTHERS
COULD HARDLY
DREAM.



PRIME THORAN, THE SKRULLS
HAVE UNLEASHED ANOTHER
ATTACK SQUADRON!

ALREADY THEY
ATTACK **THIS**
POD-WORLD!

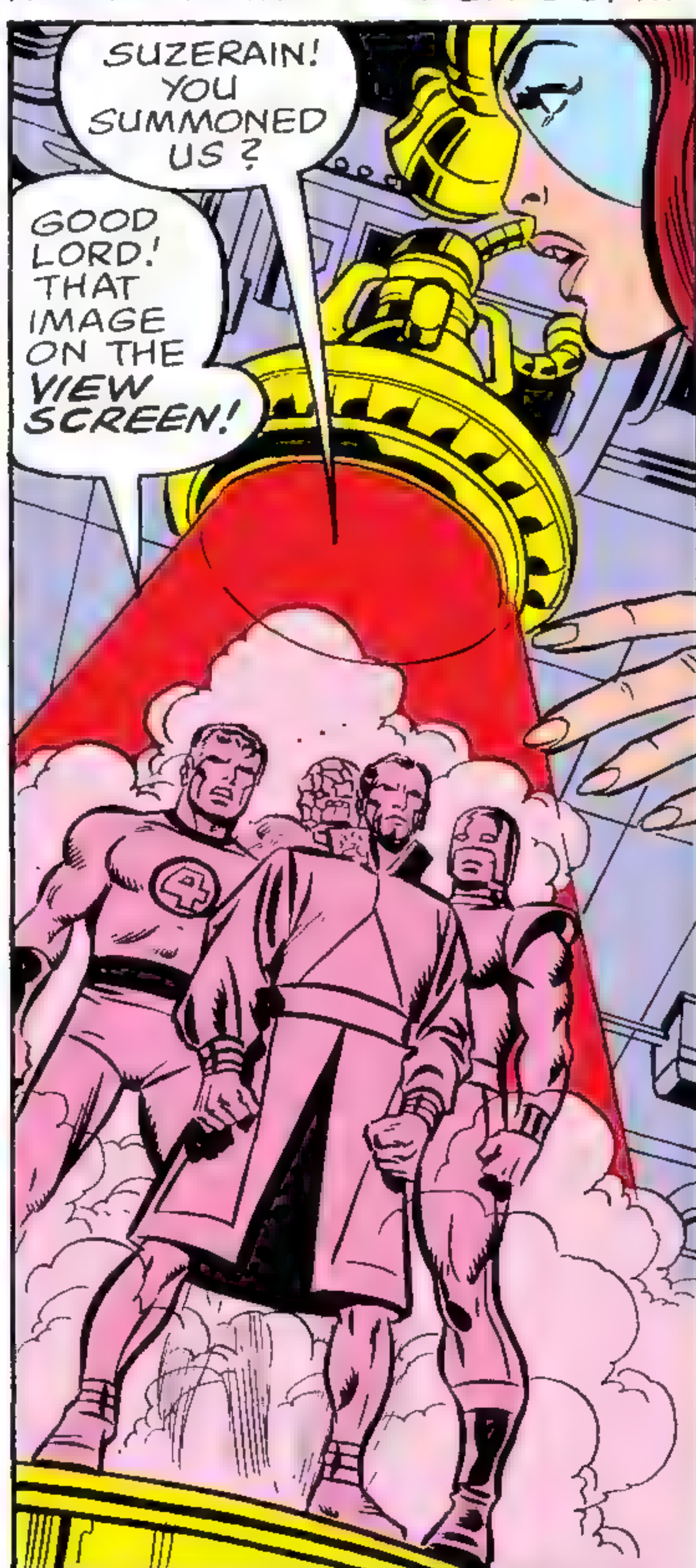
WOTTA
WE WAITIN' FER
THEN? LET'S GO
SMASH A COUPLE'A
THEM GREEN SKUNKS!



I FEAR THIS MAY
BE THE INVADER'S
FINAL RUN. WE
CAN HARDLY HOLD
OUT AGAINST
THEM MUCH
LONGER!

SIRE,
THE **LOTOX**
BEAM IS SET
FOR THE MAIN
CHAMBERROOM. THE
SUZERAIN AWAITS
YOUR PRESENCE.

A MOMENT LATER, ALL FIVE
APPEAR IN THE CHAMBERS OF...



SUZERAIN!
YOU
SUMMONED
US?

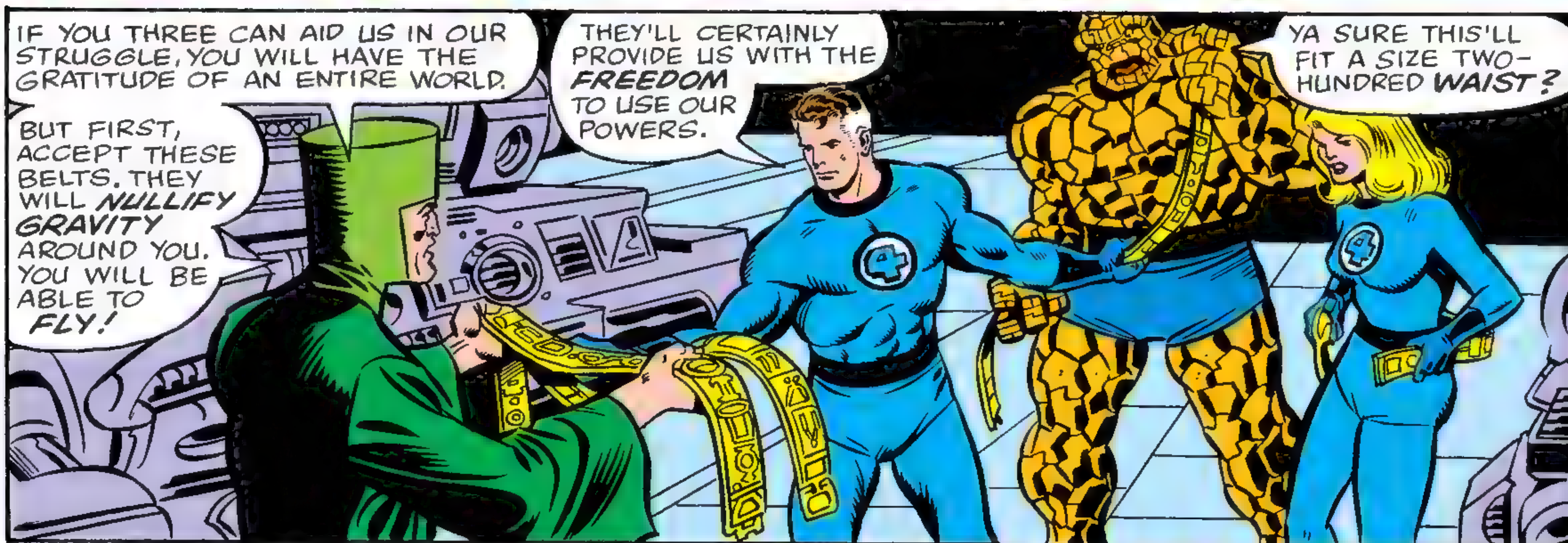
GOOD
LORD!
THAT
IMAGE
ON THE
VIEW
SCREEN!



OUR FARM WORLD HAS
BEEN OVERRUN. OUR
MINING COLONY HAS
BEEN DESTROYED!

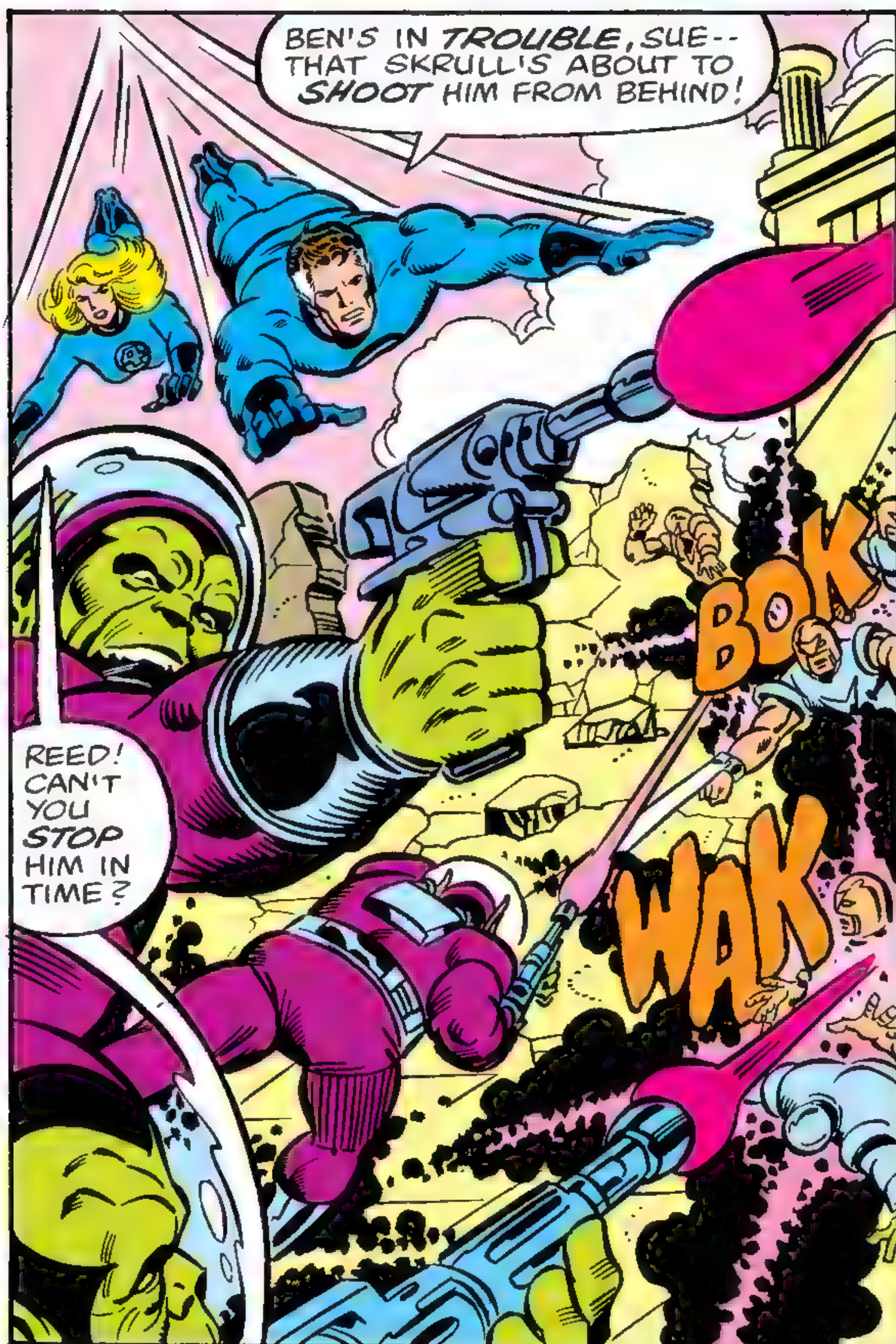
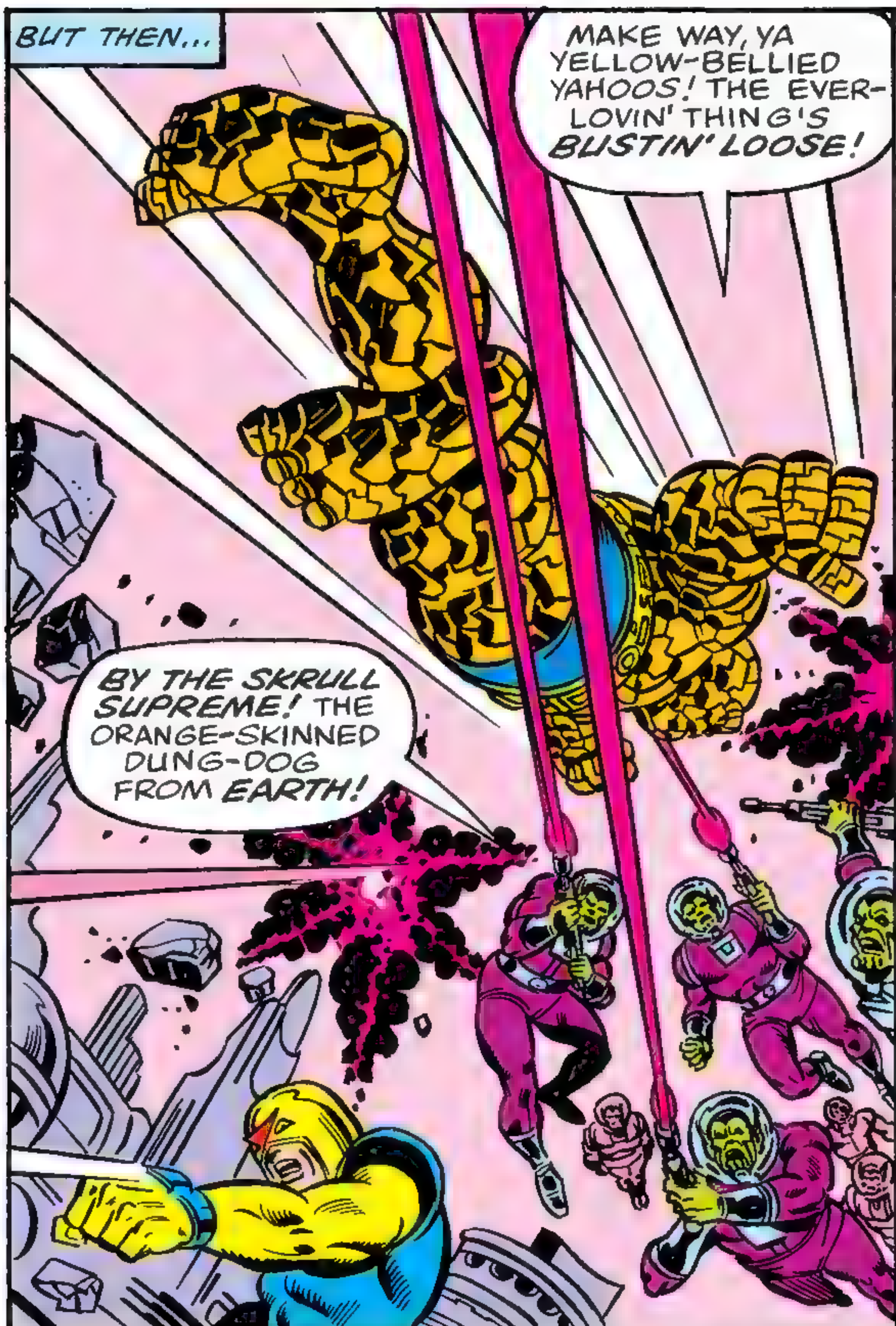
NOW THE
DEADLY
SKRULLS
ARE
LEVELLING
OUR
CITIES!

REED!
IT ALL
LOOKS
SO
HOPE-
LESS!

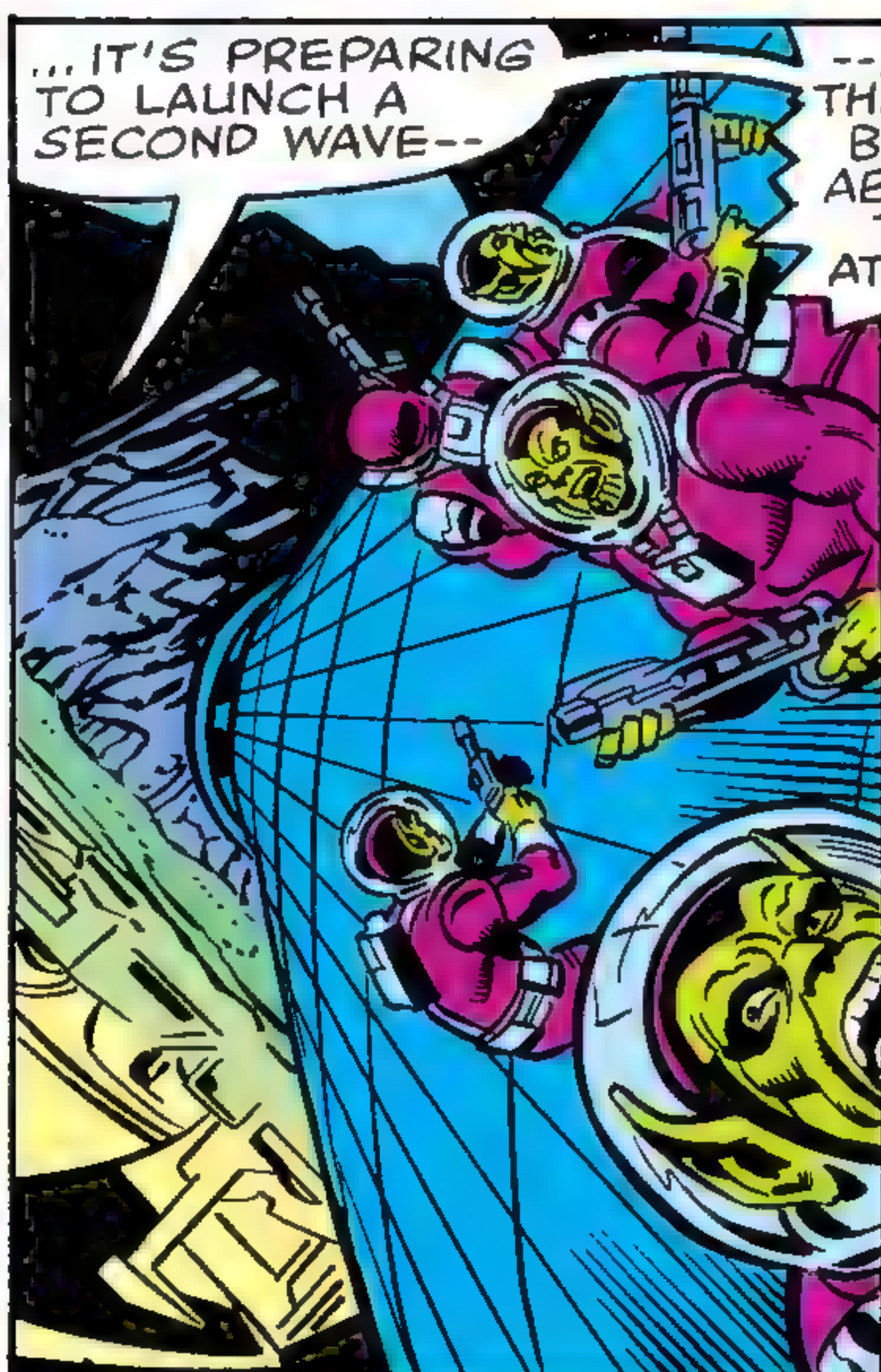
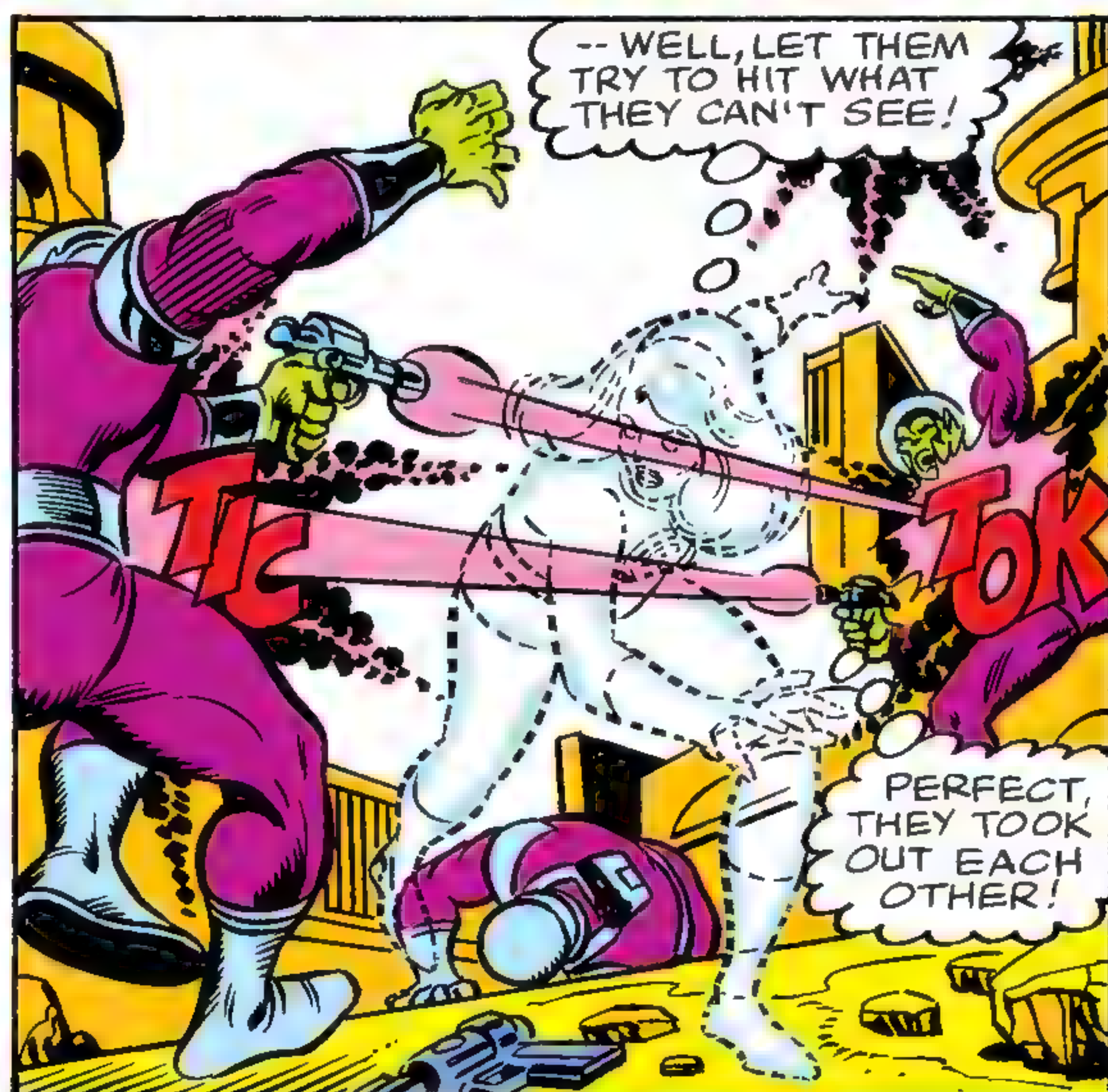
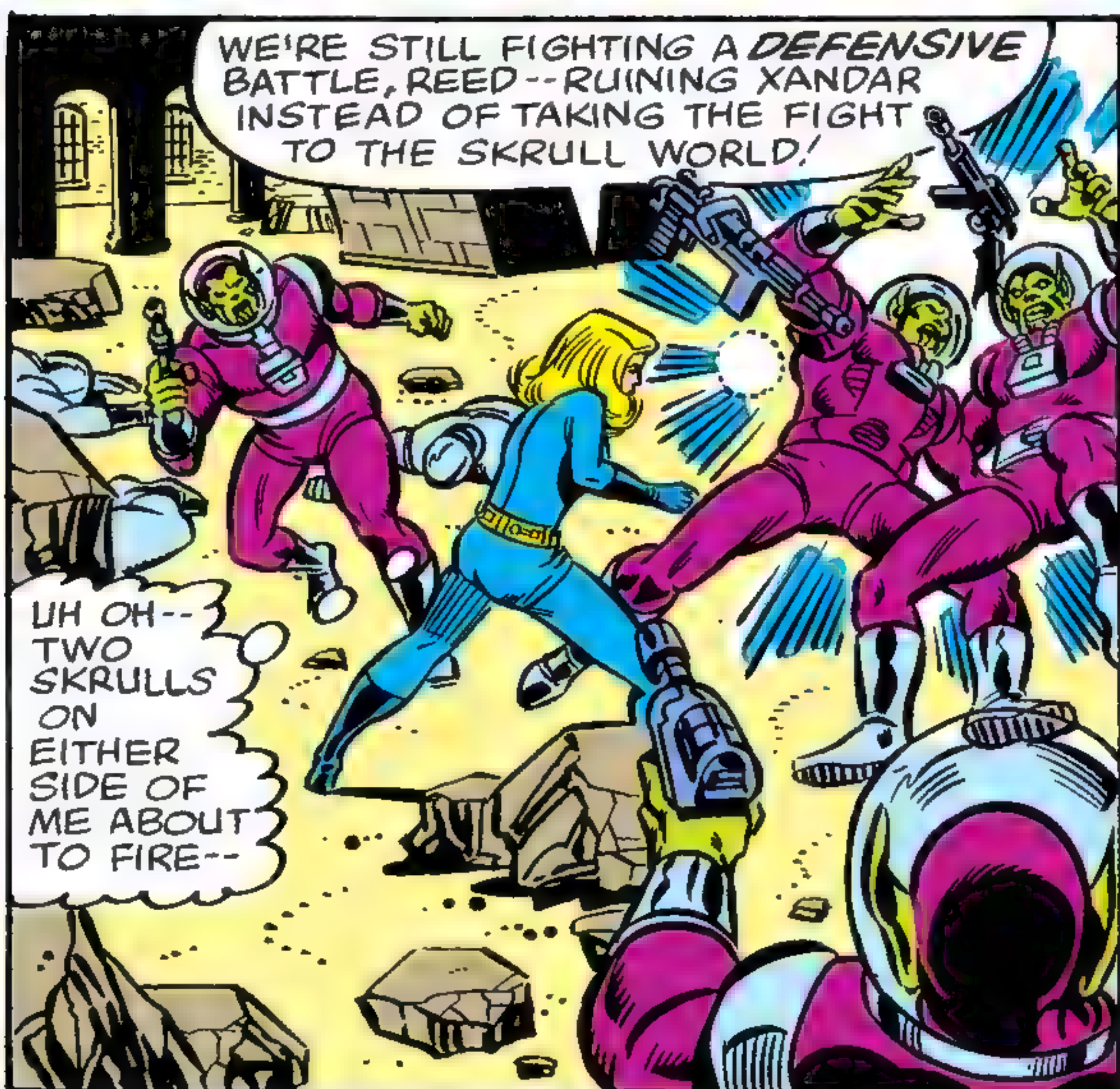


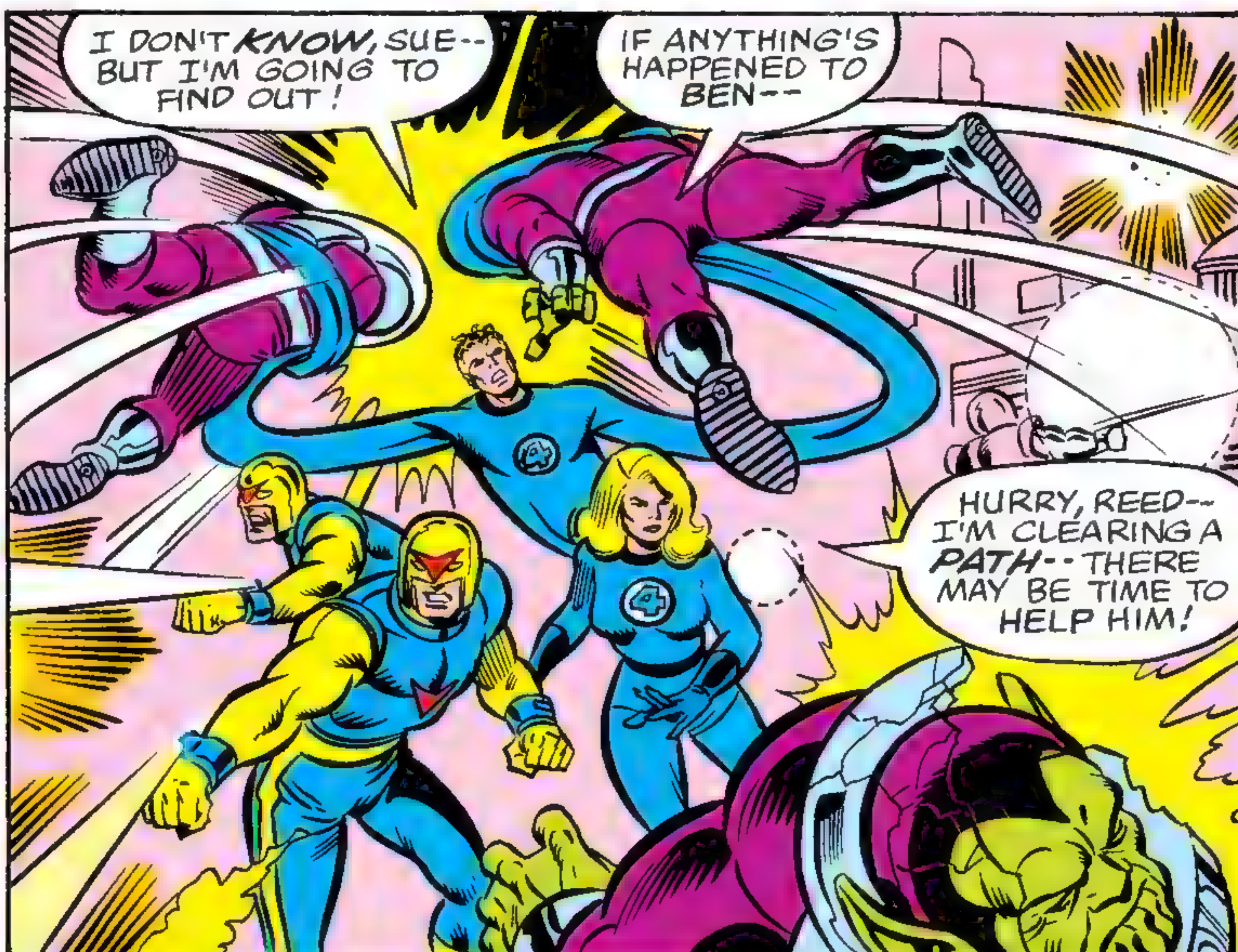
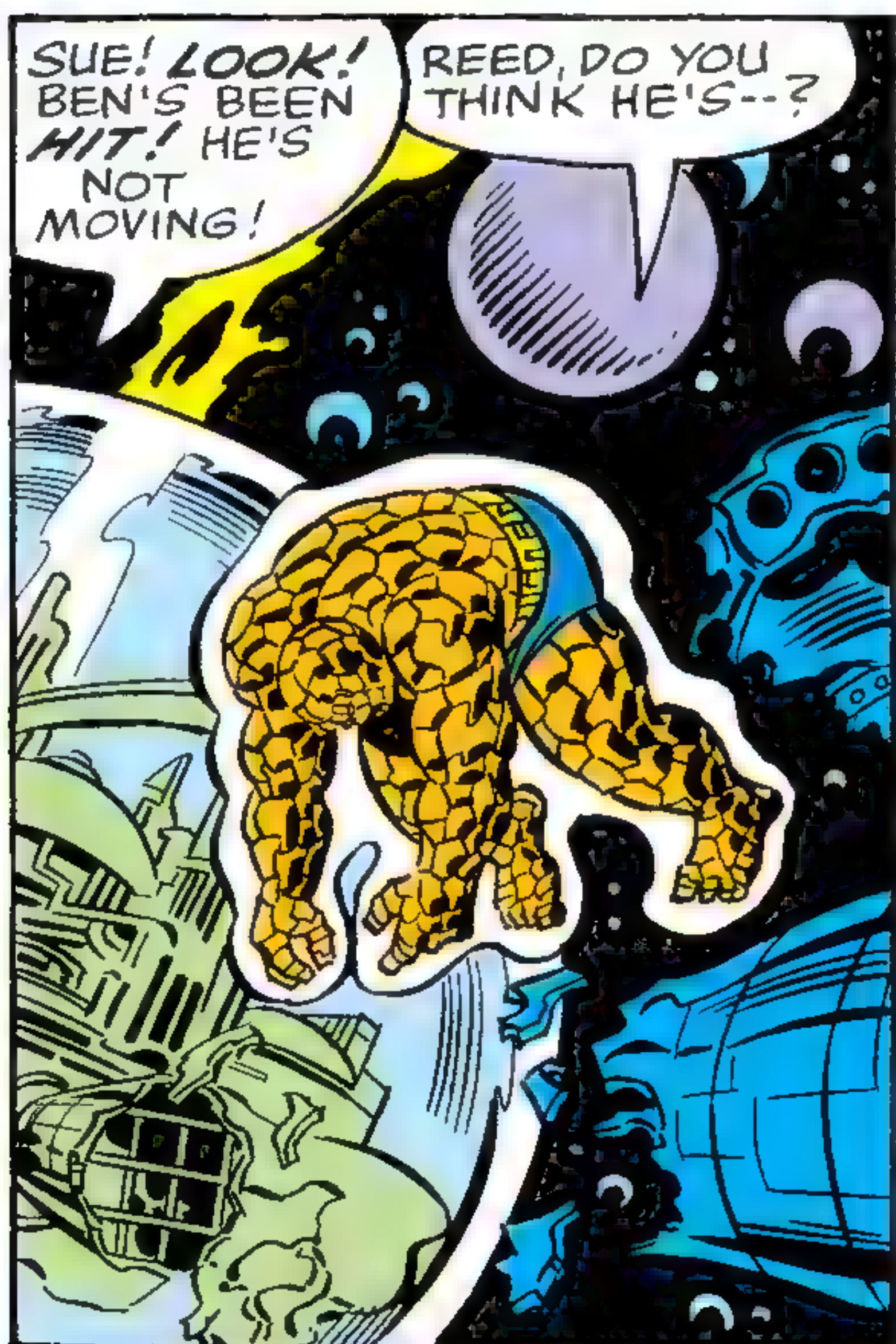
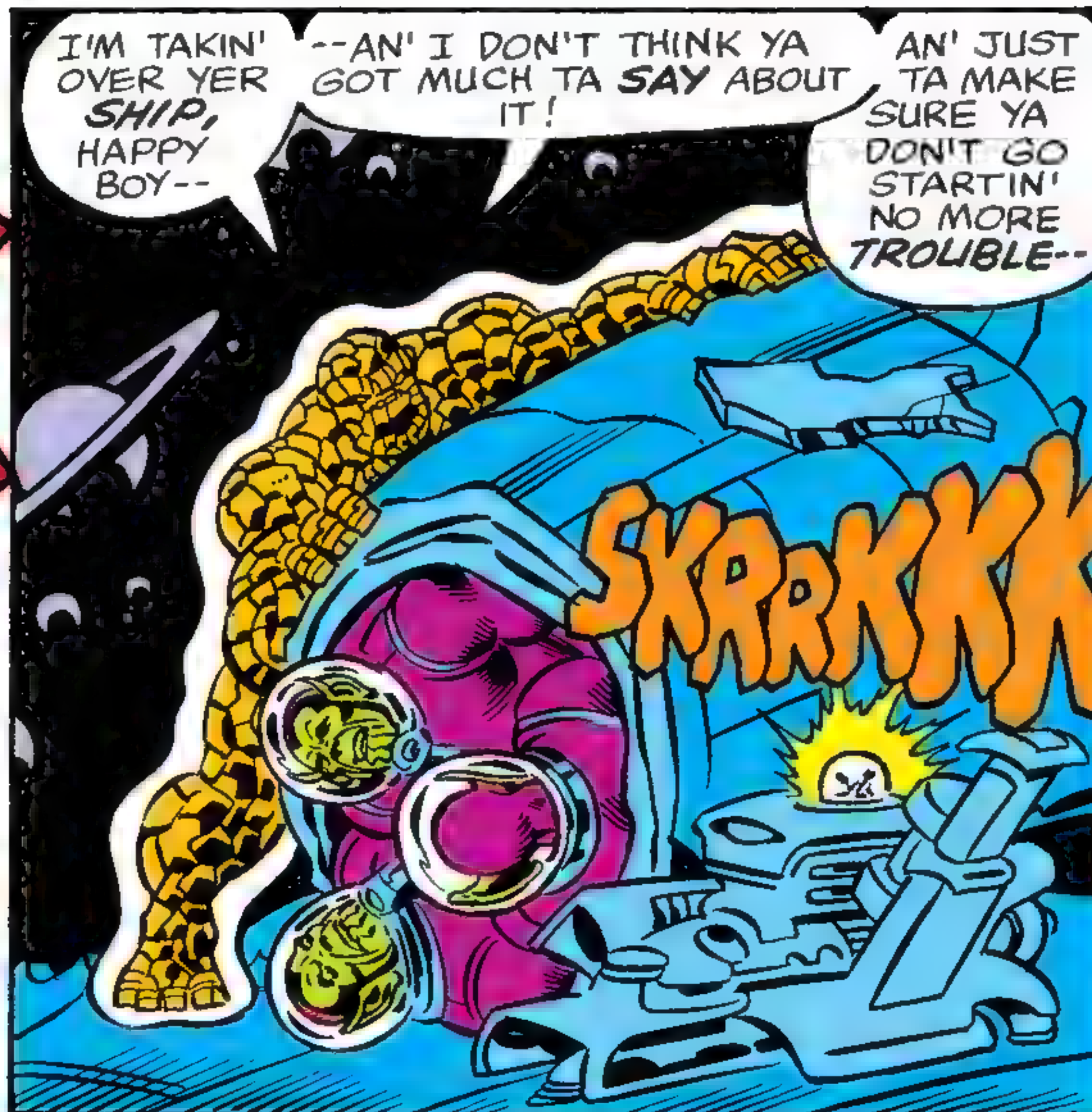
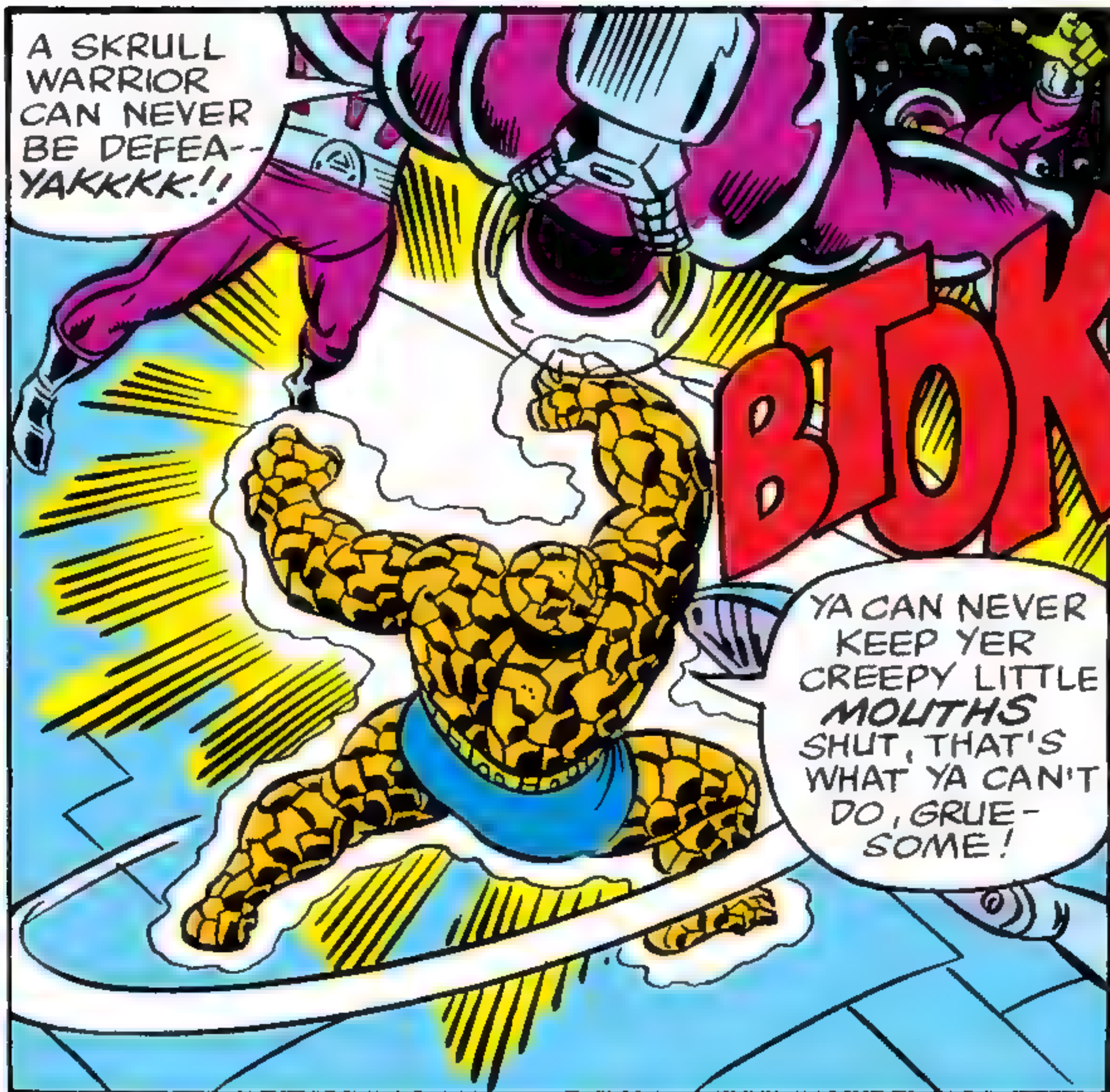
MOMENTS LATER, THE FANTASTIC FOUR JOIN MORE THAN FIVE THOUSAND GRIM-FACED CENTURIONS IN THEIR STRUGGLE TO PROTECT THIS ALIEN WORLD...





SUDDENLY, REED SNAPS HIS BODY FORWARD, AND THE SKRULLS CAUGHT WITHIN HIS ELONGATED BODY ARE WHIPPED SENSELESSLY AWAY.

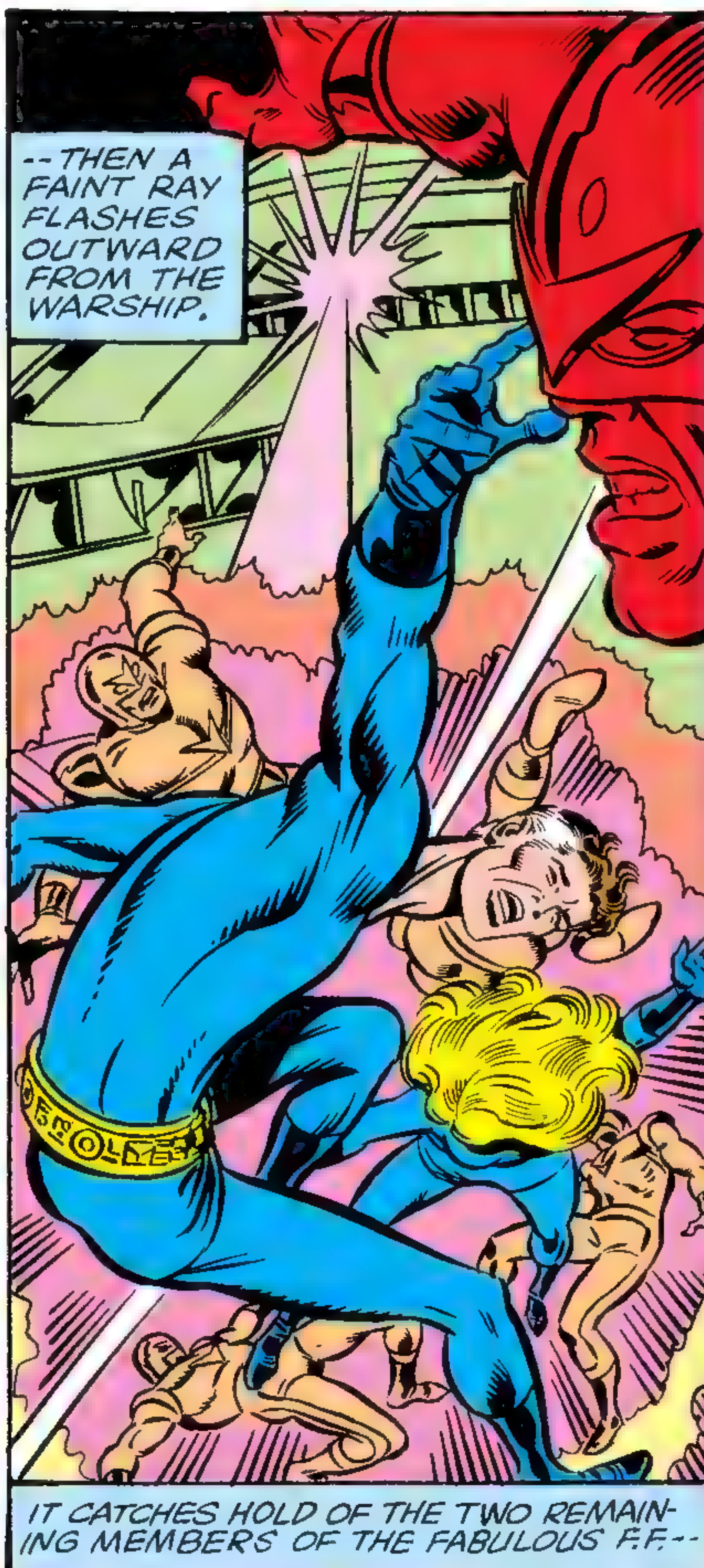




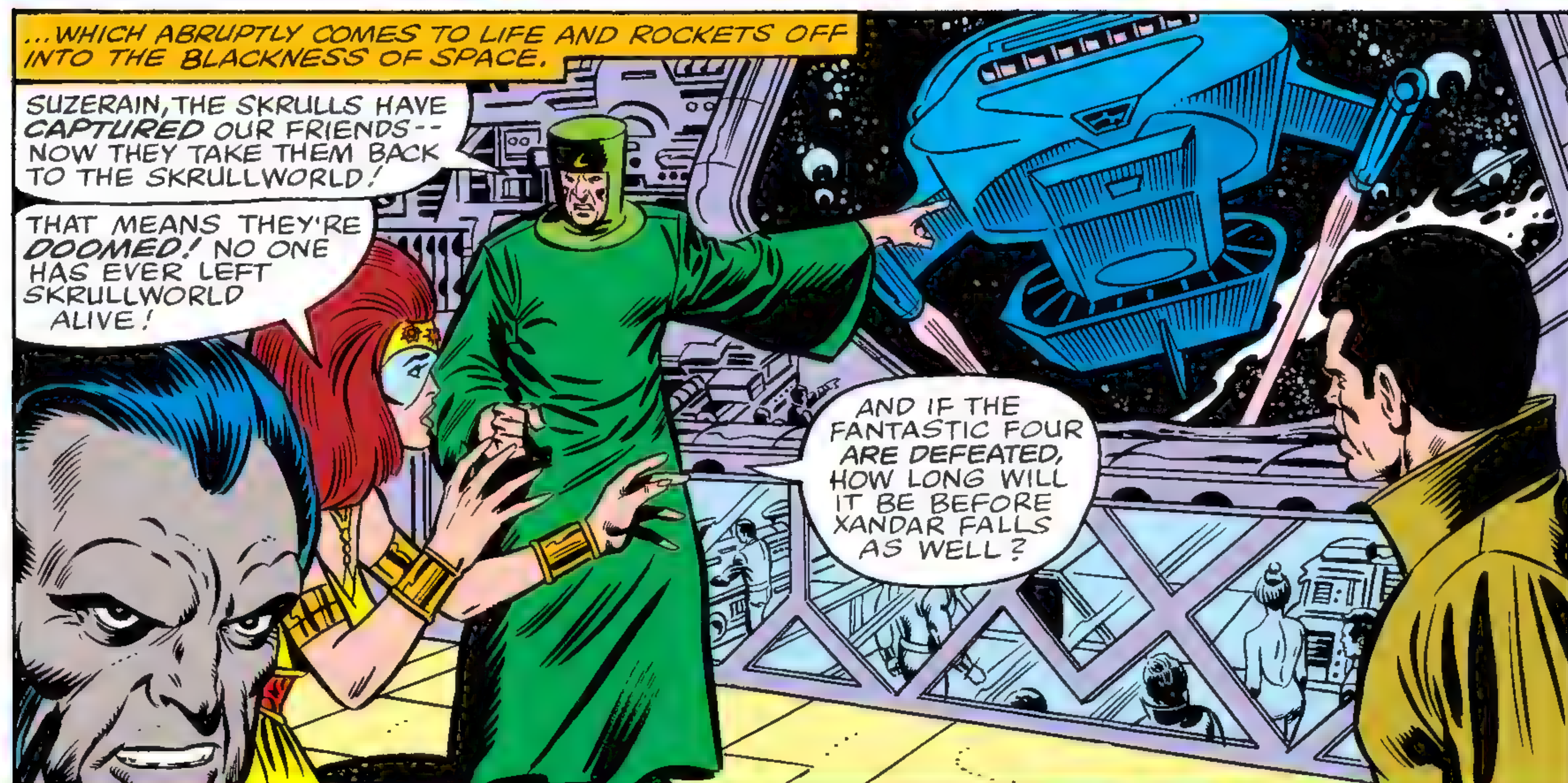
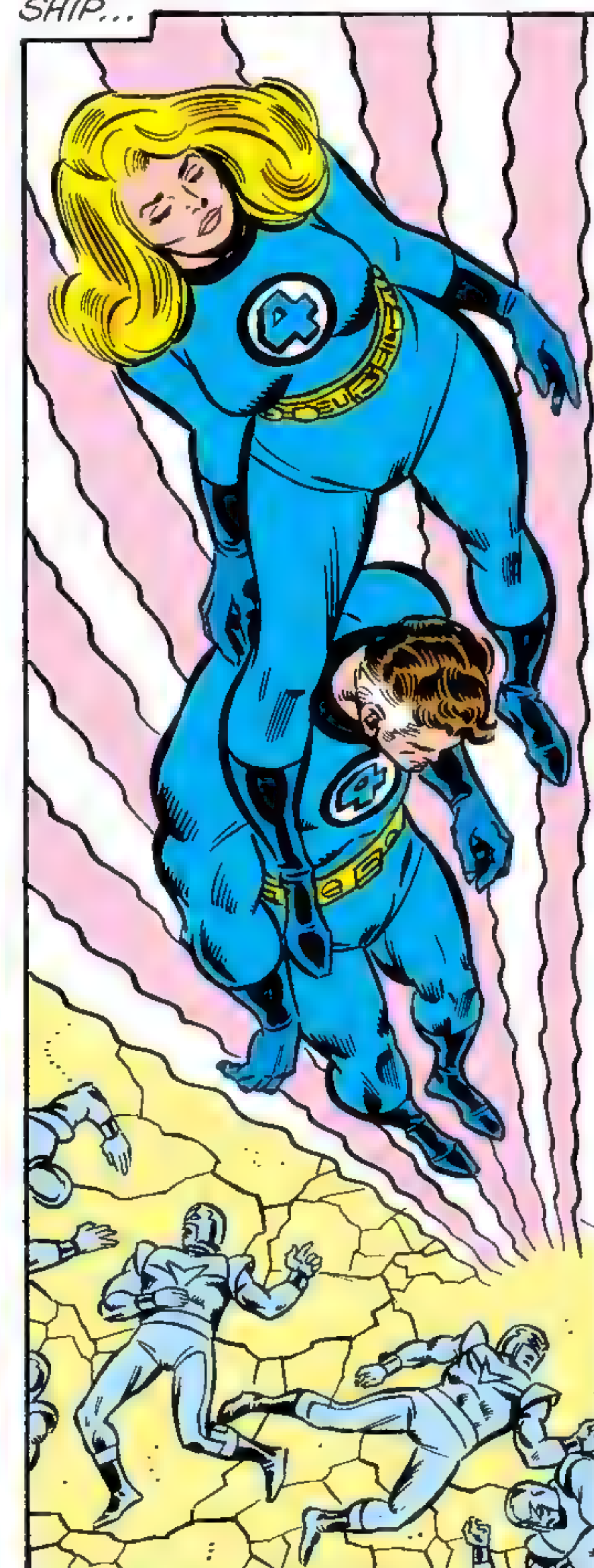
BUT THEN, A GIANT SHADOW
CROSSES THEIR VISION. THEY
STARE UPWARDS IN HORROR--



THE NEXT MOMENT, ALL GOES IN-
SANE. A SINGLE, NERVE-NUMBING
SONIC BLAST RENDERS REED AND
SUE INSTANTLY UNCONSCIOUS--



--AND BEFORE THE ASTONISHED
AND HELPLESS XANDARIANS,
THEY ARE WHISKED AWAY--
DRAWN INTO THE SKULL STAR-
SHIP...



NEXT ISSUE: OUR WILD NEW EPIC CONTINUES TO BUILD UP STEAM, AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT 30 DAYS FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER. IT ALL HAPPENS IN THE PAGES OF NOVA #25 (ON SALE FEB. 20)... AND CONTINUES HERE A WEEK LATER WITH... **THE DEATH OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**

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FANTASTIC FOUR

THE SKRULL
JURY HAS
RENDERED
ITS VERDICT!

pollard
&
SINNOTT

AND THE
SENTENCE IS--
DEATH!



A brilliant scientist—his best friend—the woman he loves—and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!

MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same.

Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**

THE DEATH OF... THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

ALL THIS HAS GONE BEFORE: THE F.F. TRAVELED TO THE STAR-SYSTEM ANDROMEDA TO SAVE THE FOUR-SECTIONED WORLD OF XANDAR FROM THE INVADING SKRULL ARMADA! BUT REED, SUE, AND BEN FIND THEMSELVES DEFEATED AND TAKEN CAPTIVE TO THE SKRULL HOME-WORLD...

AT LONG LAST I'VE DEFEATED THE FANTASTIC FOUR! NO LONGER WILL YOU PROVE TO BE A THORN IN OUR PLANS FOR UNIVERSAL CONQUEST!

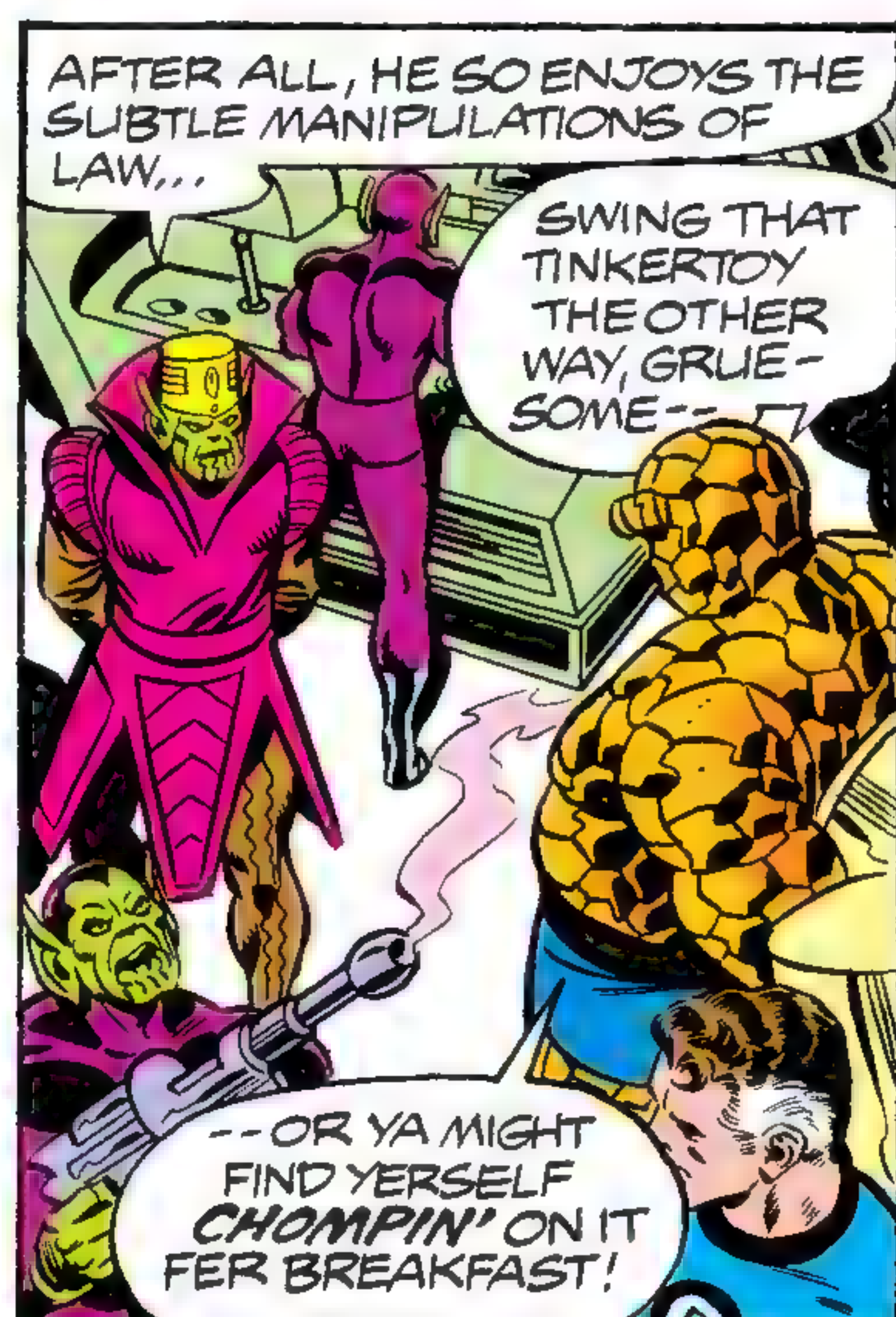
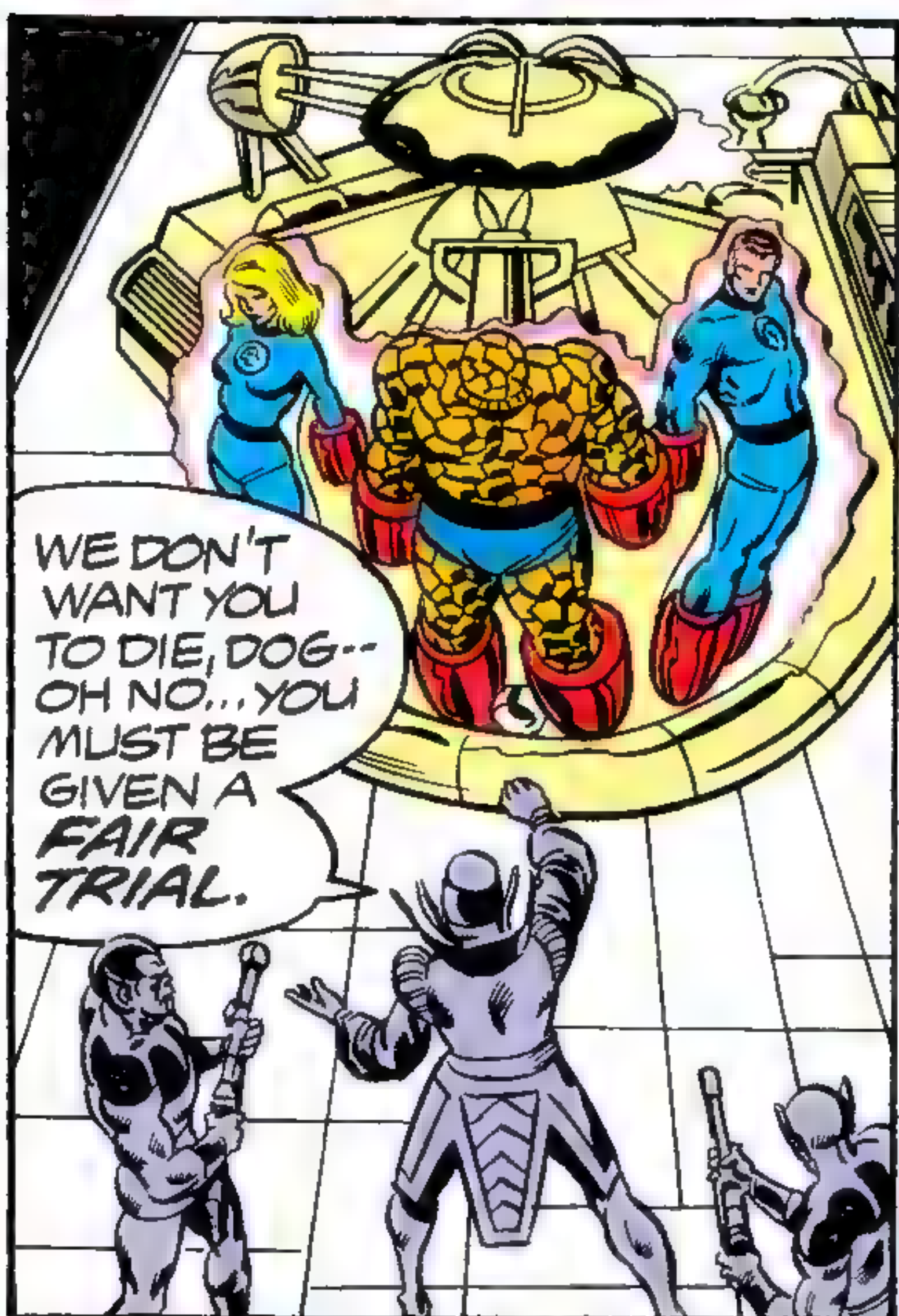
LEMME OUTTA THIS HERE DOO-HICKEY AN' I'LL STUFF THOSE PLANS RIGHT UP YER SOCKS, GREENIE!

DON'T ANTAGONIZE HIM, BEN--RIGHT NOW THE SKRULLS HOLD THE UPPER HAND!

MARV WOLFMAN
WRITER/EDITOR
KEITH POLLARD
and
JOE SINNOTT
ILLUSTRATORS

J. COSTANZA / B. SEAN
letters / colors

JIM SHOOTER
CONS. EDITOR



BEHOLD HIGH COURT... THE SUPREME JUDICIAL CENTER OF THE GREAT SKRULL EMPIRE! ITS HIGH-COLUMNED GALLERY IS TEEMING WITH LEERING SPECTATORS ANXIOUS FOR THE ALREADY-DETERMINED SENTENCE TO BE EXECUTED...

WHILE SITTING HUNCHED OVER AND IMPATIENT, THE JEERING JURY OF SIX LISTEN AS JUDGE HAGAR THE CRUEL COMMENCES THIS LATEST SESSION OF COURT.

DOGS! YOU HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF TREASON AGAINST THE SKRULL EMPIRE!

TIME AND TIME AGAIN YOU MUD-SUCKING LITTLE MAGGOTS HAVE INTERFERED WITH OUR DESIGNS FOR UNIVERSAL CONQUEST.

INDEED, IN THIS VERY COURT, I, THE EXALTED HIGH JUDICATOR, HAVE SENTENCED YOU TO DEATH AND WORSE A HUNDRED TIMES AND MORE...

...IN ABSENTIA, OF COURSE.

BUT, NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT WE PROUD SKRULLS DO NOT HONOR THE LUDICROUS RULES SET FORTH DURING THE CONVENTION OF FORNAX -- WE WOULD NOT DO AWAY WITH PRISONERS OF WAR WITHOUT A FAIR TRIAL.

SO, SPEAK BEFORE I TURN YOU OVER TO JAKETCH, A MERE APPRENTICE EXECUTIONER. HOW DO YOU FILTHY MURDERERS PLEAD?

THIS IS RIDICULOUS, THEY'VE ALREADY RENDERED THEIR VERDICT.

I TOLD 'JA WE SHOULD 'A CLOBBERED 'EM WHEN WE HAD THE CHANCE!

NOW THEY GOT THIS BLAMED POWER-RE-STRAINER GIZMO STRAPPED TA MY BACK AN' I CAN'T EVEN LIFT MY LITTLE PINKY.

KLUNK!

WELL... *WELL*--? DO YOU DOGS INTEND TO KEEP US WAITING?

I'VE GOT OTHER CASES ON TODAY'S VENUE, TALK...OR I'LL PRONOUNCE SENTENCE WITHOUT DELAY!

WELL, WHAT NOW, BIG-BRAIN? THEY AIN'T GONNA LET US FOLD UP OUR TENT AN' SPLIT.

UNLESS WE CAN EFFECT AN ESCAPE, *OUR FATE IS SEALED--*

--BUT WE MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO SAVE UNTOLD HUNDREDS ON XANDAR.

THE ENERGY-RESTRAINER RELEASES REED RICHARDS, AND THE PROUD LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR STEPS FORWARD...

YOU HAVE US...THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED.

NOW, LEAVE XANDAR ALONE.

THAT WORLD'S ALL BUT DESTROYED...IT'S OF NO *THREAT* TO YOU... AND CERTAINLY OF NO STRATEGIC USE. WHY DESTROY IT? LET IT FLOURISH!

NEVER! IT'S OURS TO CONQUER! OURS TO RAVAGE!

SKRULLS DO NOT ACCEPT MERE DEFEAT AS ENOUGH!

YOU MURDERING FOOLS! THERE'S ROOM ENOUGH IN THE UNIVERSE FOR EVERYONE!

THERE'S NO NEED TO *DEVASTATE* AN ALREADY DECIMATED WORLD!

JAKETCH, YOU FOOL! THE PRISONER HAS GONE MAD!

WHAT'S TAKING YOU SO LONG--? *EXECUTE HIM!*

YOUR ORDER IS OBEYED, JUDICATOR.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT-- THEY GUNNED HIM DOWN LIKE HE WAS NOTHIN'!

SKREEE

AKK

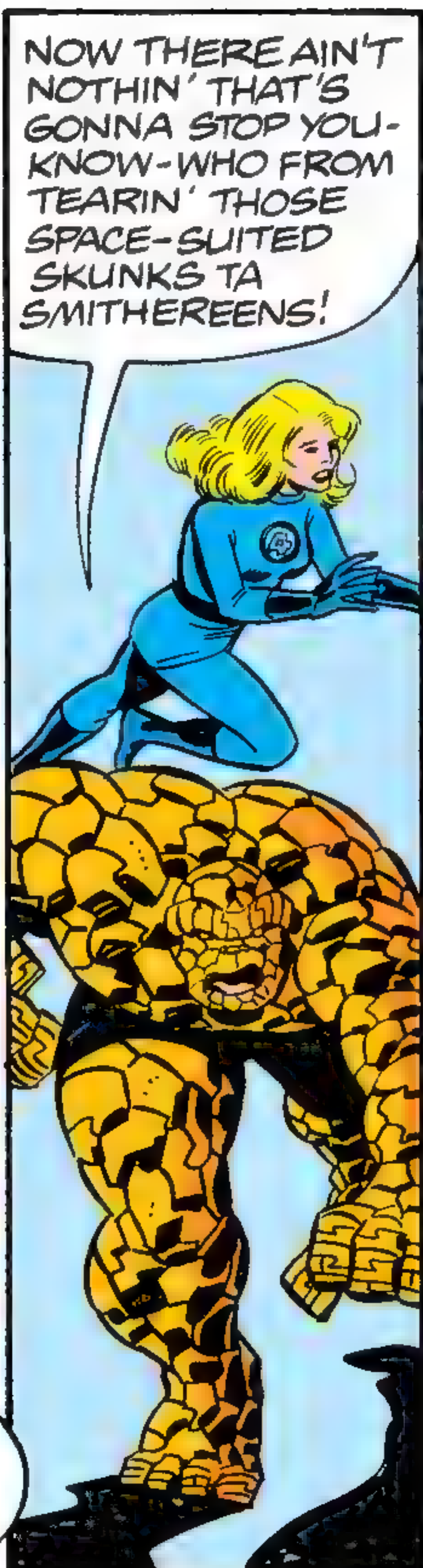
OH NO-- NO! *REED!*



THOSE DIRTY LITTLE CREEPS JUST KILLED THE GREAT-EST--

BEN-- LOOK!

HUH? THEIR GIZMO BANDS ARE DISAPPEARIN'!?



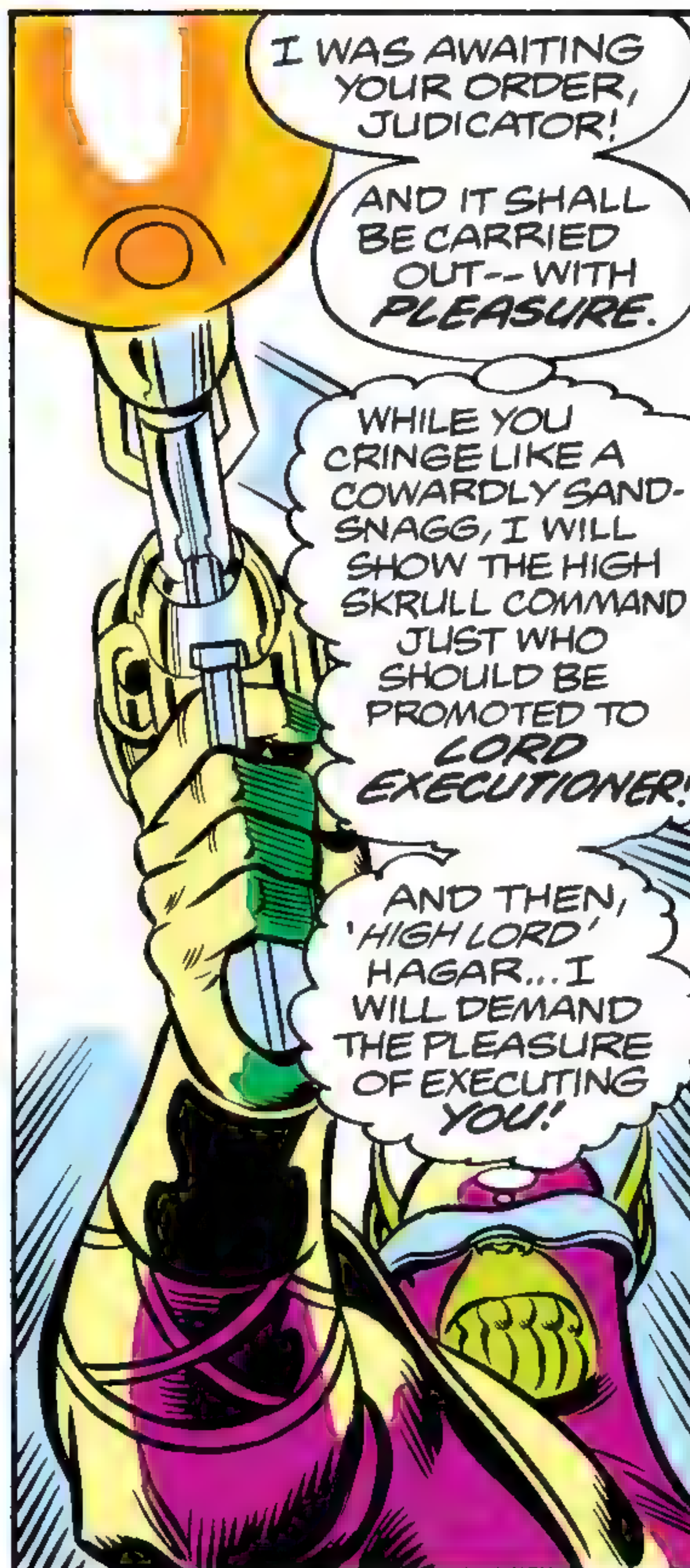
NOW THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' THAT'S GONNA STOP YOU-KNOW-WHO FROM TEARIN' THOSE SPACE-SUITED SKUNKS TA SMITHEREENS!



YA KILLED THE BEST FRIEND I EVER HAD... SO NOW YER GONNA *PAY*, SKRULLY-- BETTER BELIEVE YER GONNA *PAY*!

JAKETCH! JAKETCH! HURRY, YOU SLOW-MOVING DUNG-DOG! STOP THAT LUMBERING BUFFOON!

DID YOU HEAR ME? DO YOUR DUTY!

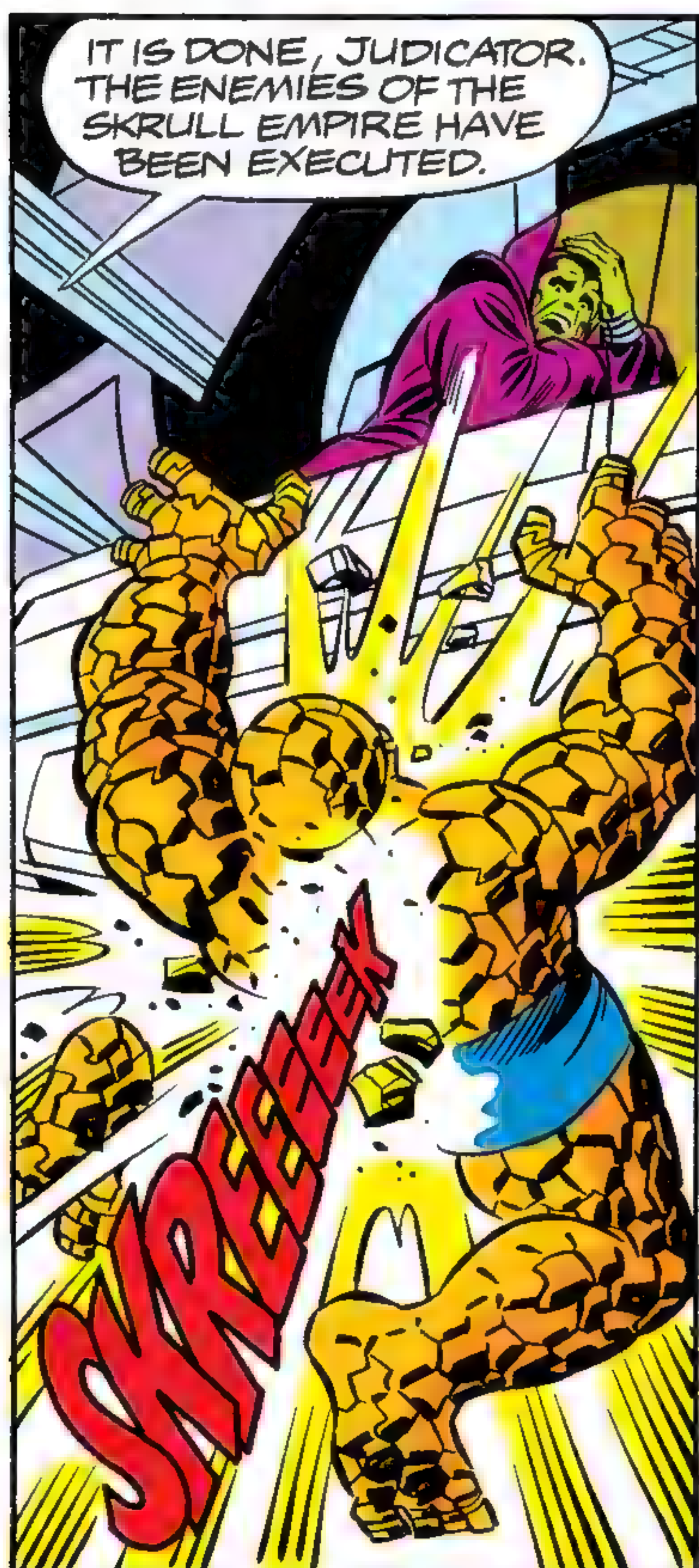


I WAS AWAITING YOUR ORDER, JUDICATOR!

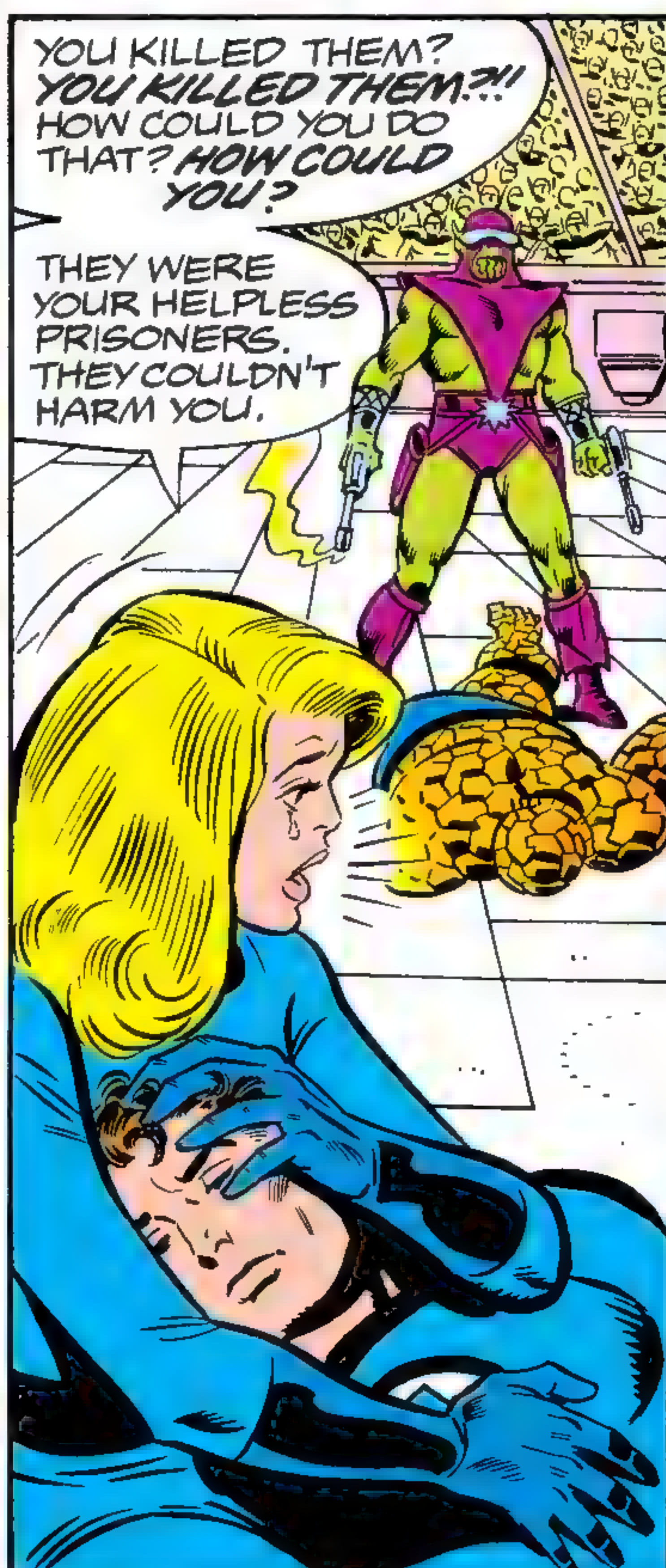
AND IT SHALL BE CARRIED OUT-- WITH PLEASURE.

WHILE YOU CRINGE LIKE A COWARDLY SAND-SNAGG, I WILL SHOW THE HIGH SKRULL COMMAND JUST WHO SHOULD BE PROMOTED TO **LORD EXECUTIONER!**

AND THEN, 'HIGH LORD' HAGAR... I WILL DEMAND THE PLEASURE OF EXECUTING YOU!



IT IS DONE, JUDICATOR. THE ENEMIES OF THE SKRULL EMPIRE HAVE BEEN EXECUTED.



YOU KILLED THEM? YOU KILLED THEM?! HOW COULD YOU DO THAT? HOW COULD YOU?

THEY WERE YOUR HELPLESS PRISONERS. THEY COULDN'T HARM YOU.



SILENCE, EARTH-SLIME! SILENCE! THIS IS STILL A COURT OF LAW...

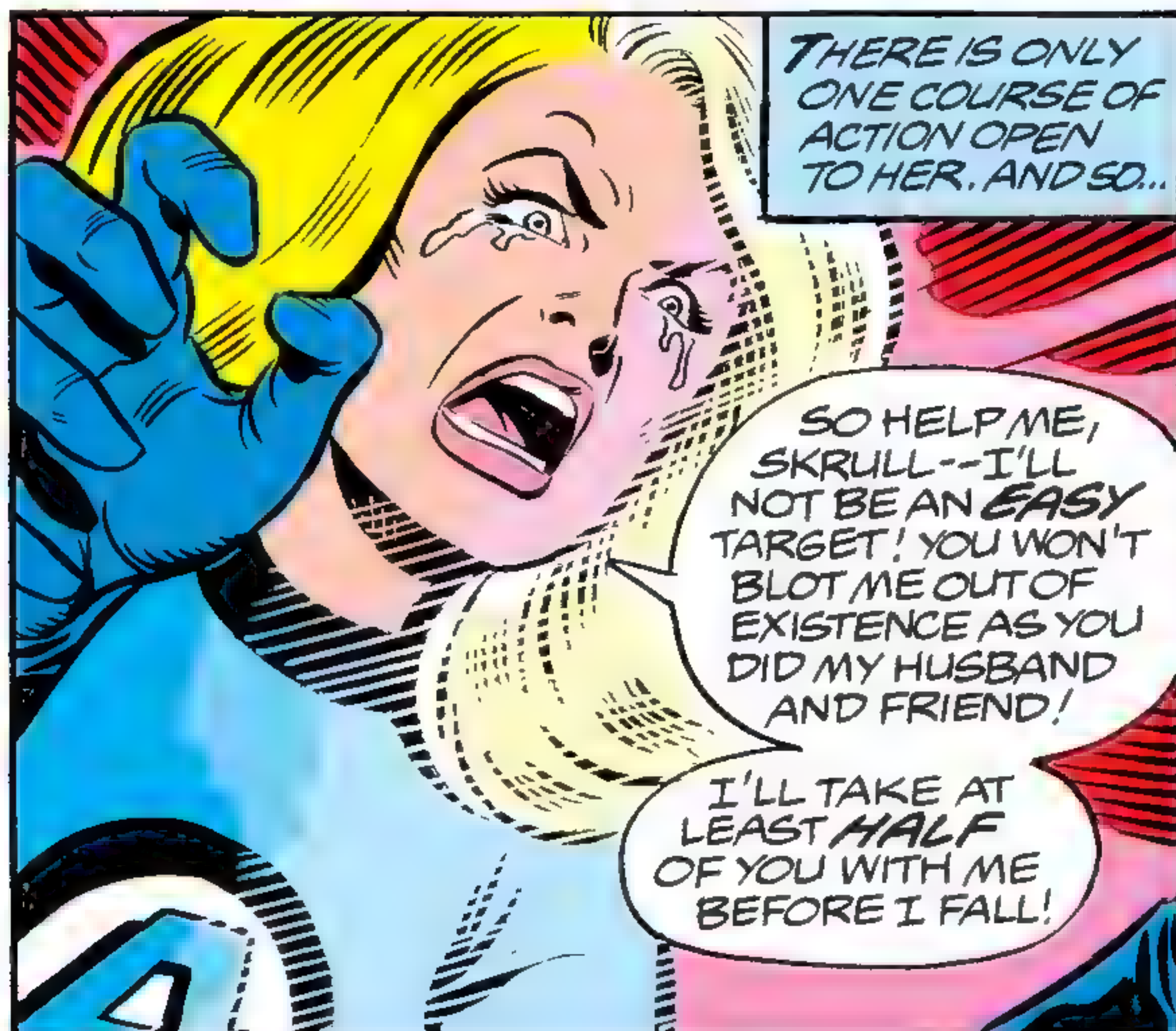
I WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY FURTHER OUTBREAK.

WE RELEASED THE ENERGY-RE-STRAINERS AND YOUR FRIENDS ATTACKED US, THAT IS PROOF ENOUGH OF YOUR HOSTILE INTENTIONS AGAINST US.

JAKETCH! SLAY THE FINAL EARTH-CRAWLING SLIME, AND THIS TIME, CARRY OUT MY ORDER WITHOUT DELAY!

AS JAKETCH RAISES HIS ALIEN WEAPON AND AIMS IT AT SUE, HE VOWS TERRIBLE VENGEANCE AGAINST HAGAR. AND, AS HE PRESSES HIS FINGER ON THE TRIGGER, HE ENVISIONS HIS BLOND-HAIRED TARGET AS BEING THE MAN HE DESPISES...

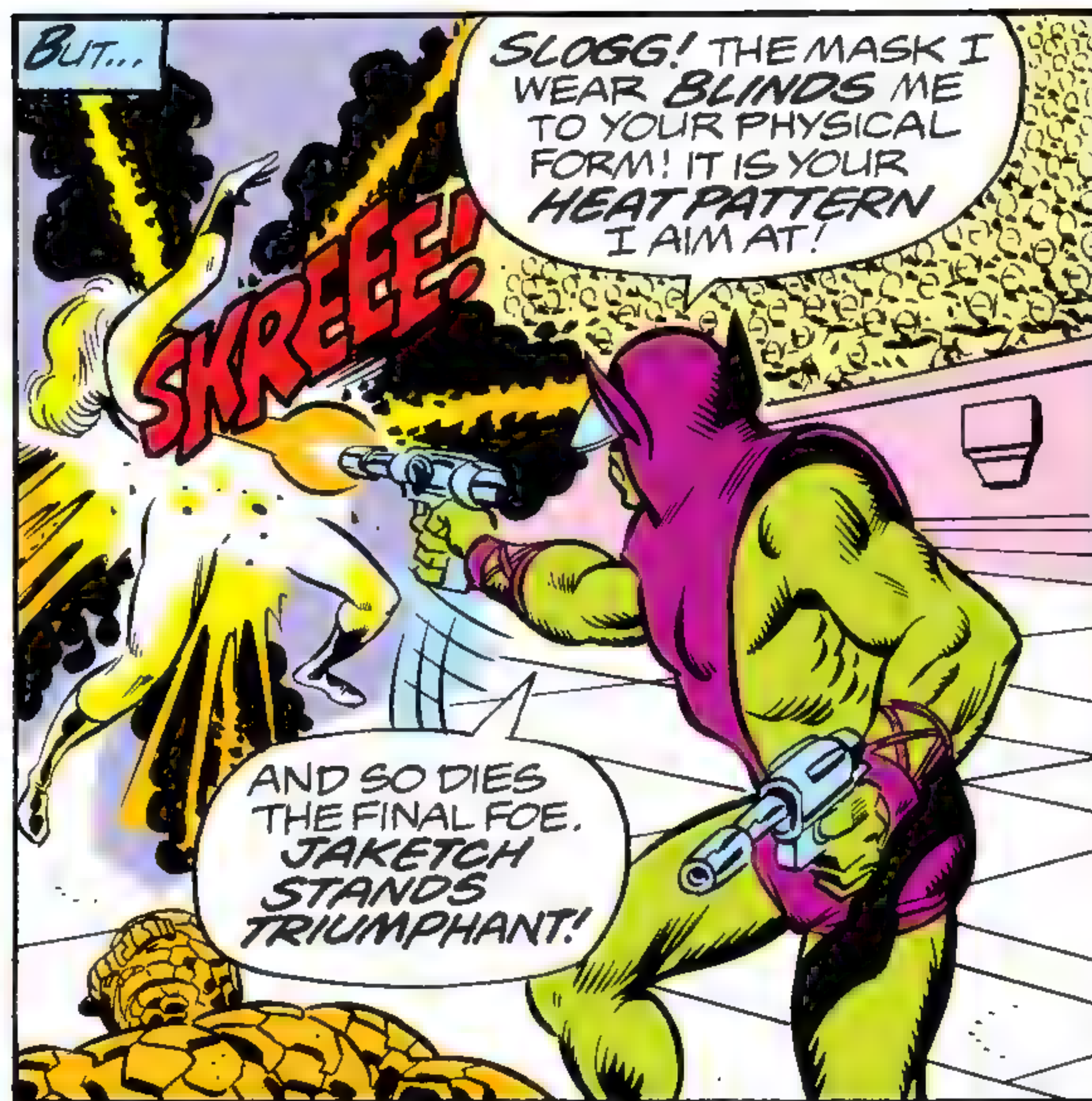
MEMORIES OF FRANKLIN AT HOME, OF JOHNNY AT SCHOOL, OF A WORLD SHE MAY NEVER SEE AGAIN, FLIT THROUGH SUE'S JUMBLED THOUGHTS...



THERE IS ONLY ONE COURSE OF ACTION OPEN TO HER, AND SO...

SO HELP ME, SKRULL--I'LL NOT BE AN **EASY** TARGET! YOU WON'T BLOT ME OUT OF EXISTENCE AS YOU DID MY HUSBAND AND FRIEND!

I'LL TAKE AT LEAST **HALF** OF YOU WITH ME BEFORE I FALL!



BUT...

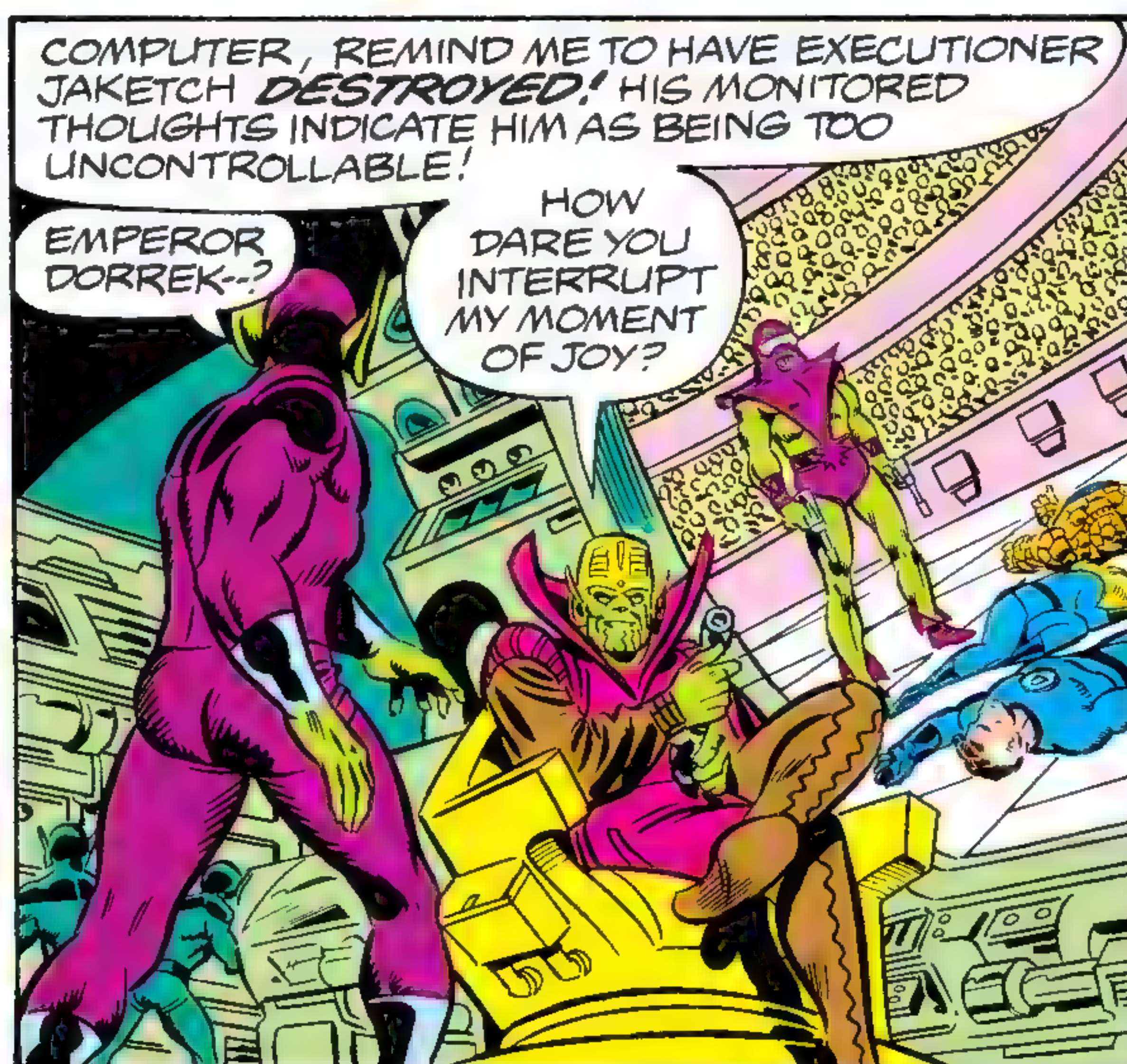
SLOGG! THE MASK I WEAR **BLINDS** ME TO YOUR PHYSICAL FORM! IT IS YOUR **HEAT PATTERN** I AIM AT!

AND SO DIES THE FINAL FOE. **JAKETCH STANDS TRIUMPHANT!**

MEANWHILE, ACROSS THE GULF OF SPACE...



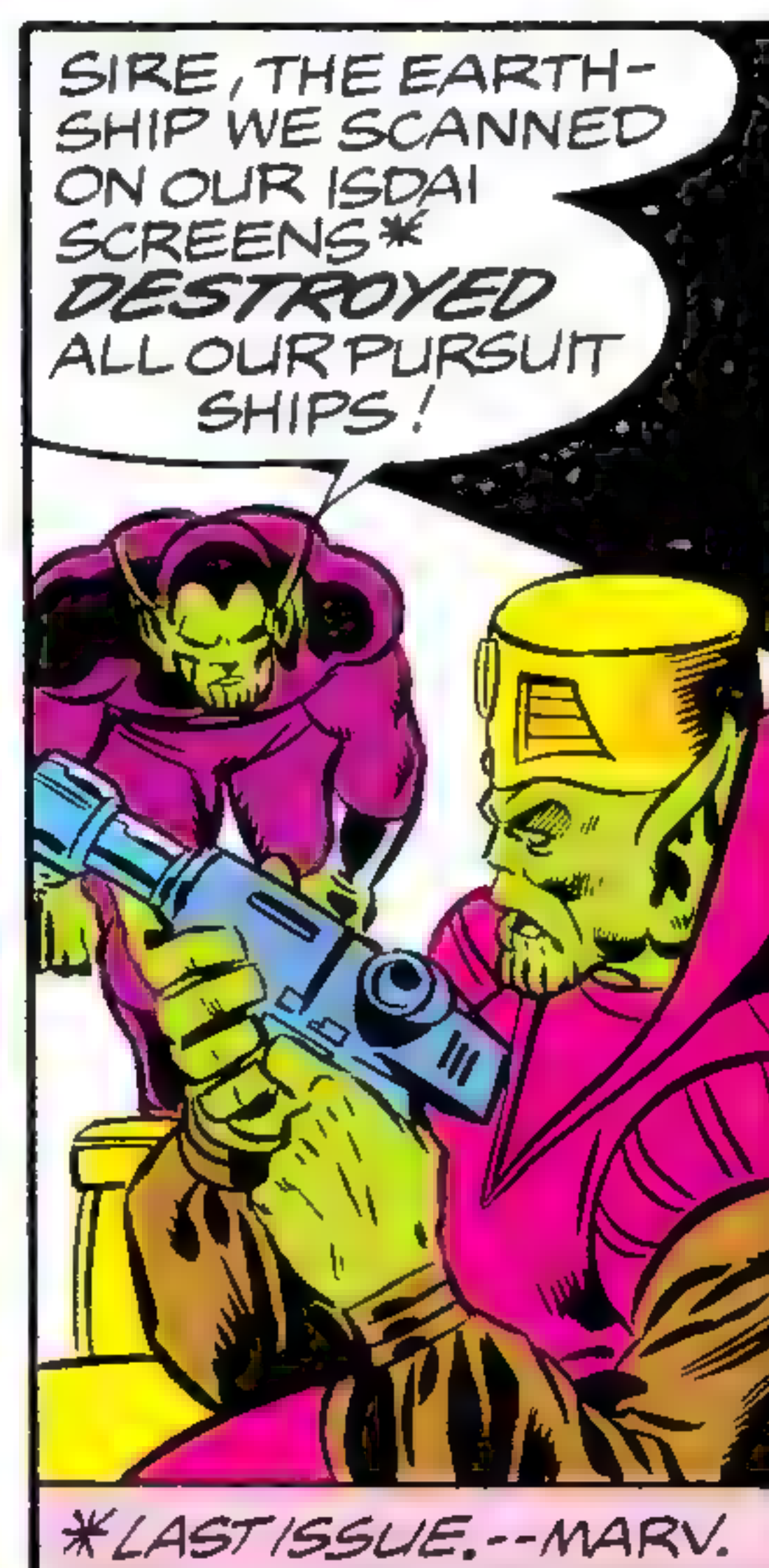
EXCELLENT! MY THREE MOST HATED ENEMIES ARE GONE.



COMPUTER, REMIND ME TO HAVE EXECUTIONER JAKETCH **DESTROYED!** HIS MONITORED THOUGHTS INDICATE HIM AS BEING TOO UNCONTROLLABLE!

EMPEROR DORREK--?

HOW DARE YOU INTERRUPT MY MOMENT OF JOY?



SIRE, THE EARTH-SHIP WE SCANNED ON OUR ISDAI SCREENS* **DESTROYED** ALL OUR PURSUIT SHIPS!

*LAST ISSUE.--MARV.



WHAT? WHAT? YOU LIE! WE'VE ELIMINATED OUR EARTH FOES!

NO, SIRE--NO!

FUMP



SO, YOU ATTACK A STUPID MESSENGER INSTEAD OF YOUR REAL FOES? YOU ARE STILL A WEAK FOOL, DORREK.

EMPRESS R'KLLL? I THOUGHT YOU WERE VISITING THE GREX-ELL BASE.

AND MISS THE EXECUTION OF OUR EARTH ENEMIES? OH NO, MY DEAR HUSBAND. NEVER.

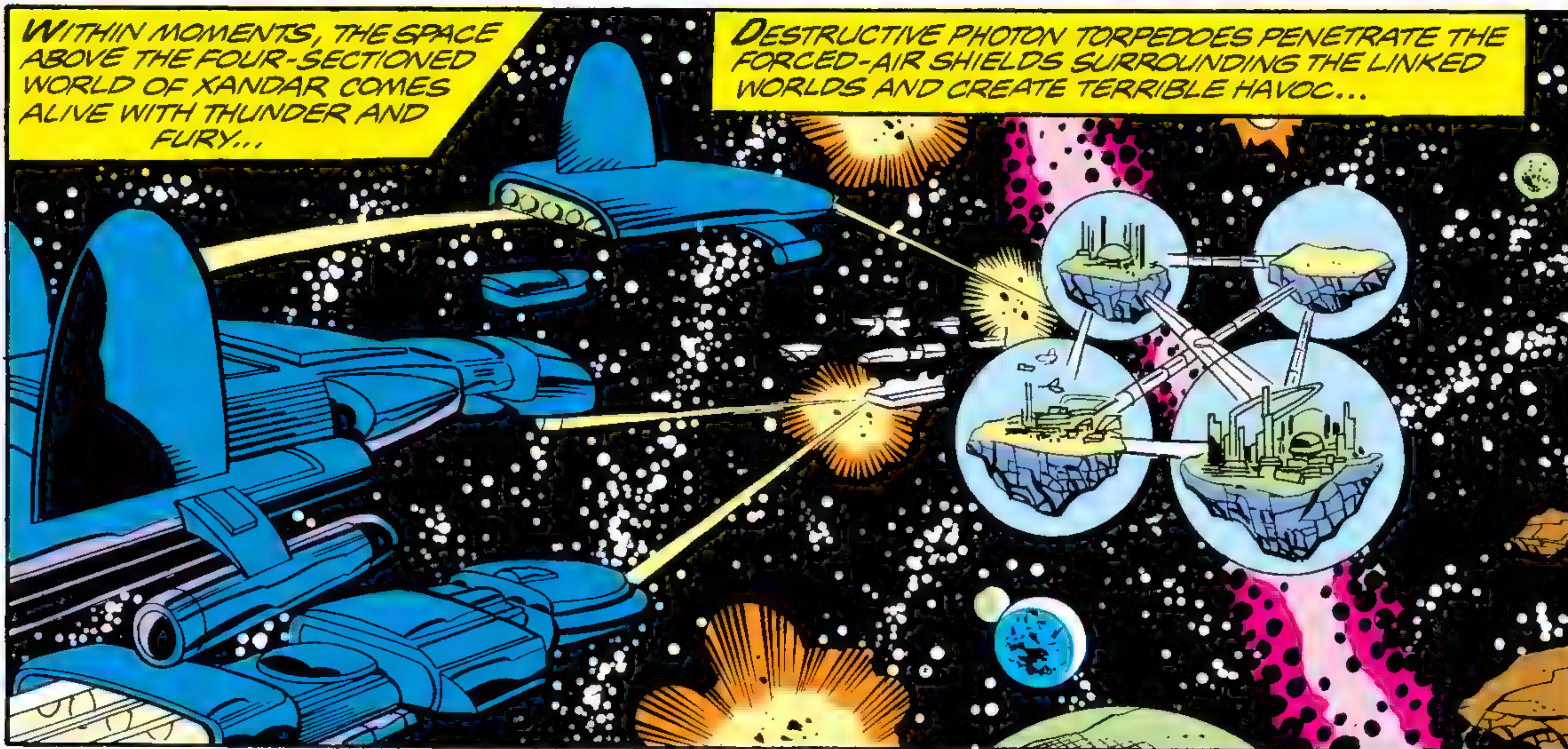
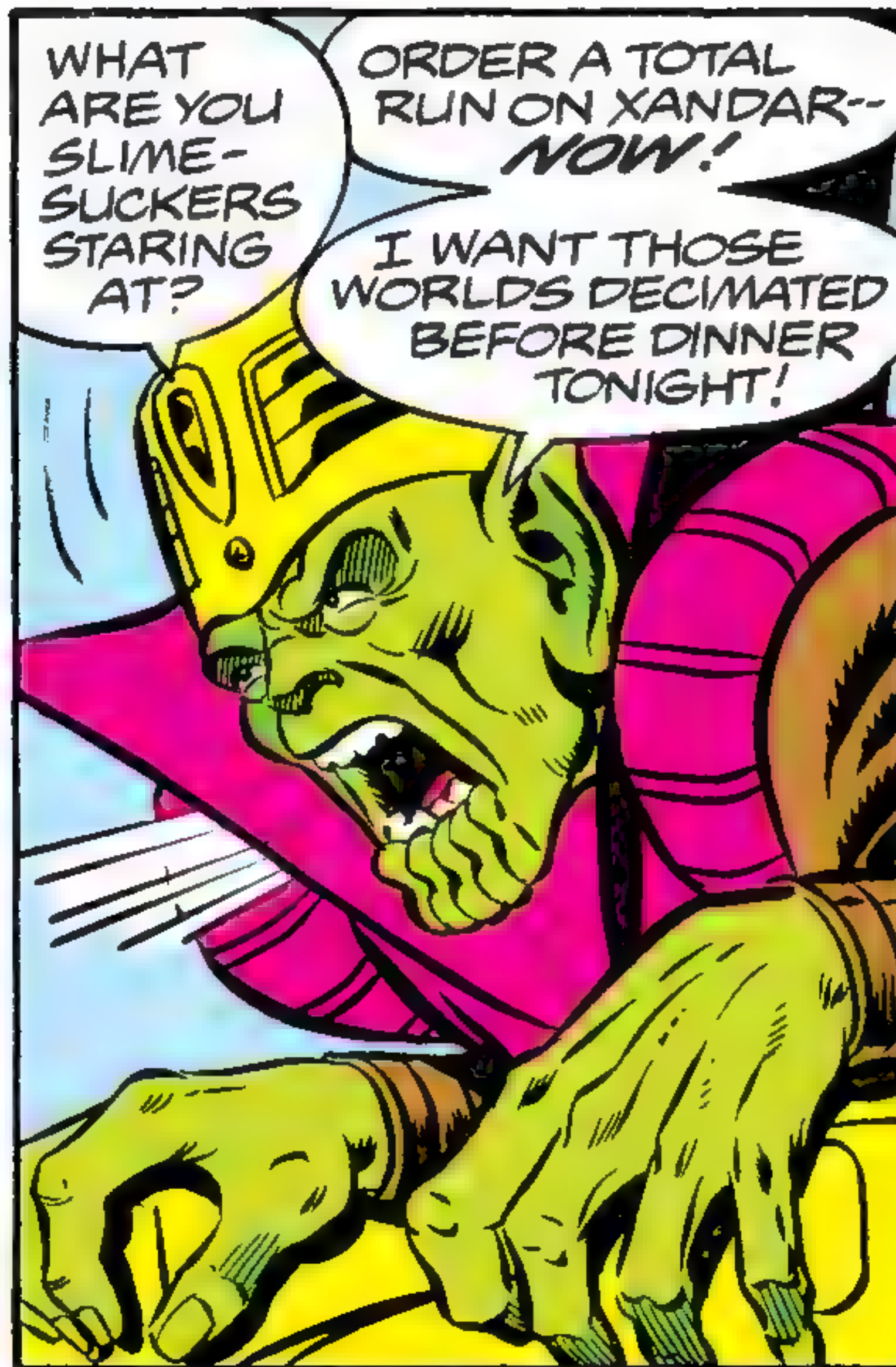
THOUGH, AFTER ALL YOUR **FAILURES**, I AM SURPRISED YOU SUCCEEDED THIS TIME.



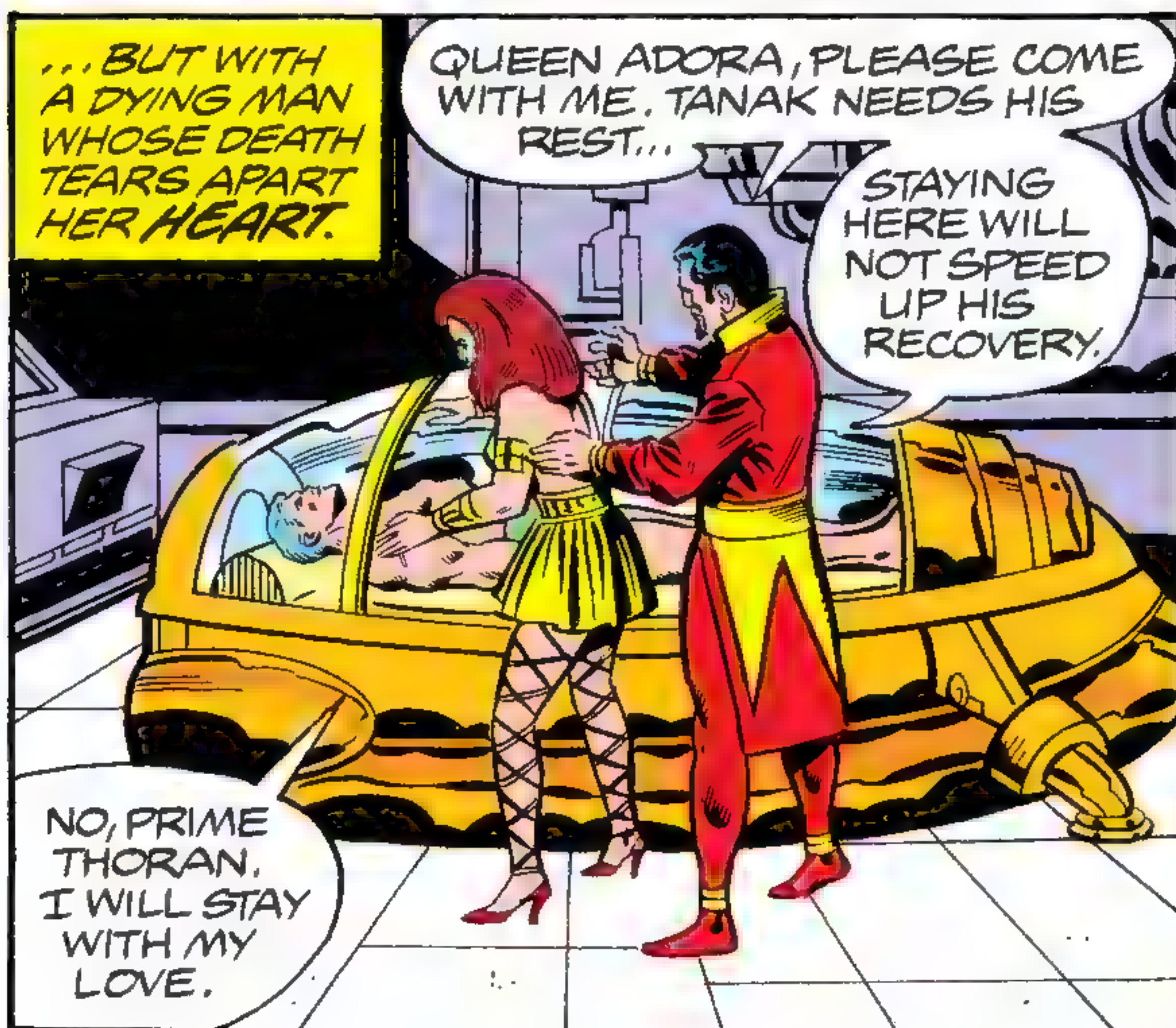
SILENCE, YOU BLATHERING FEMALE! HOW DARE YOU SPEAK THAT WAY TO YOUR HUSBAND AND EMPEROR?

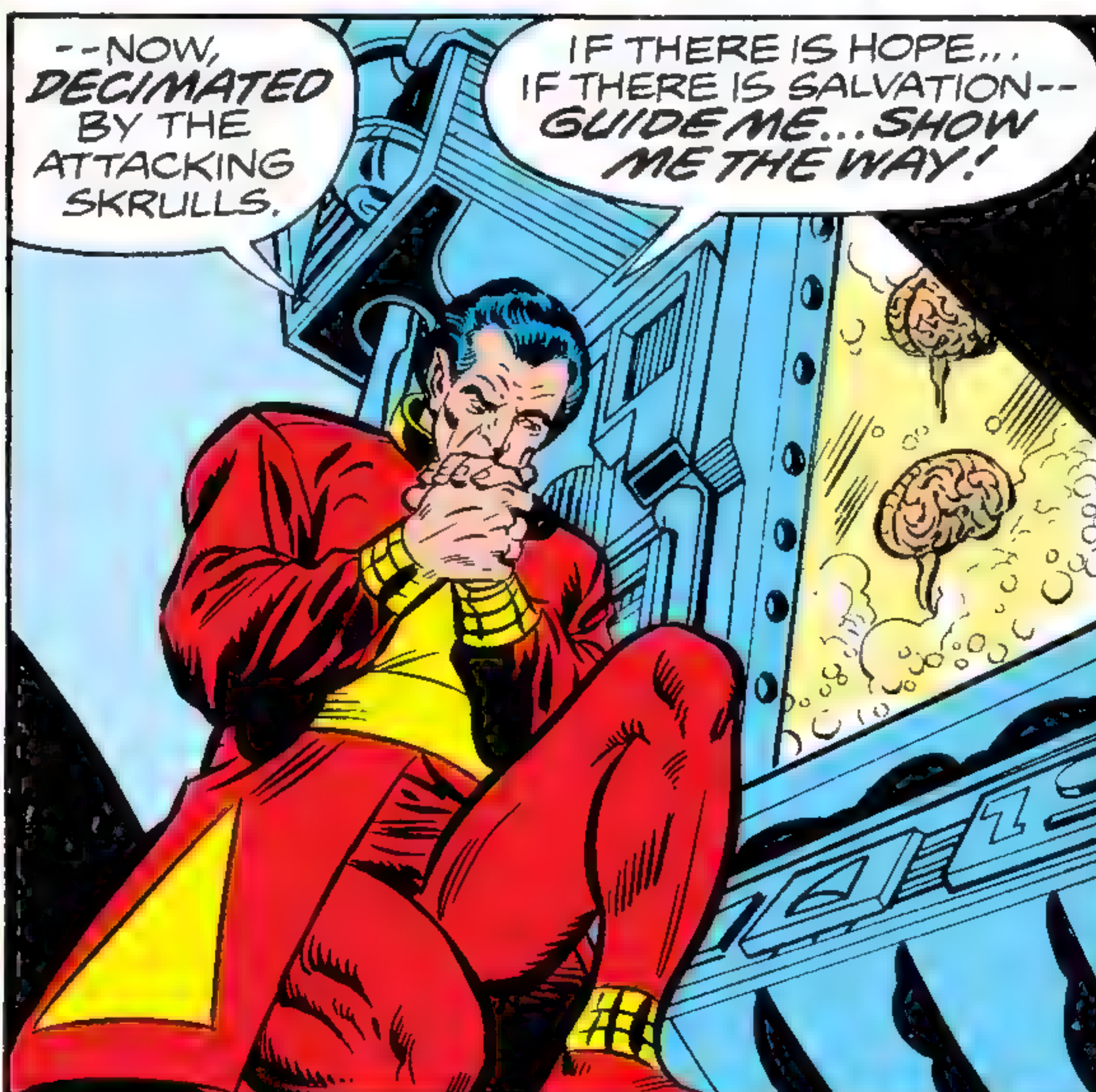
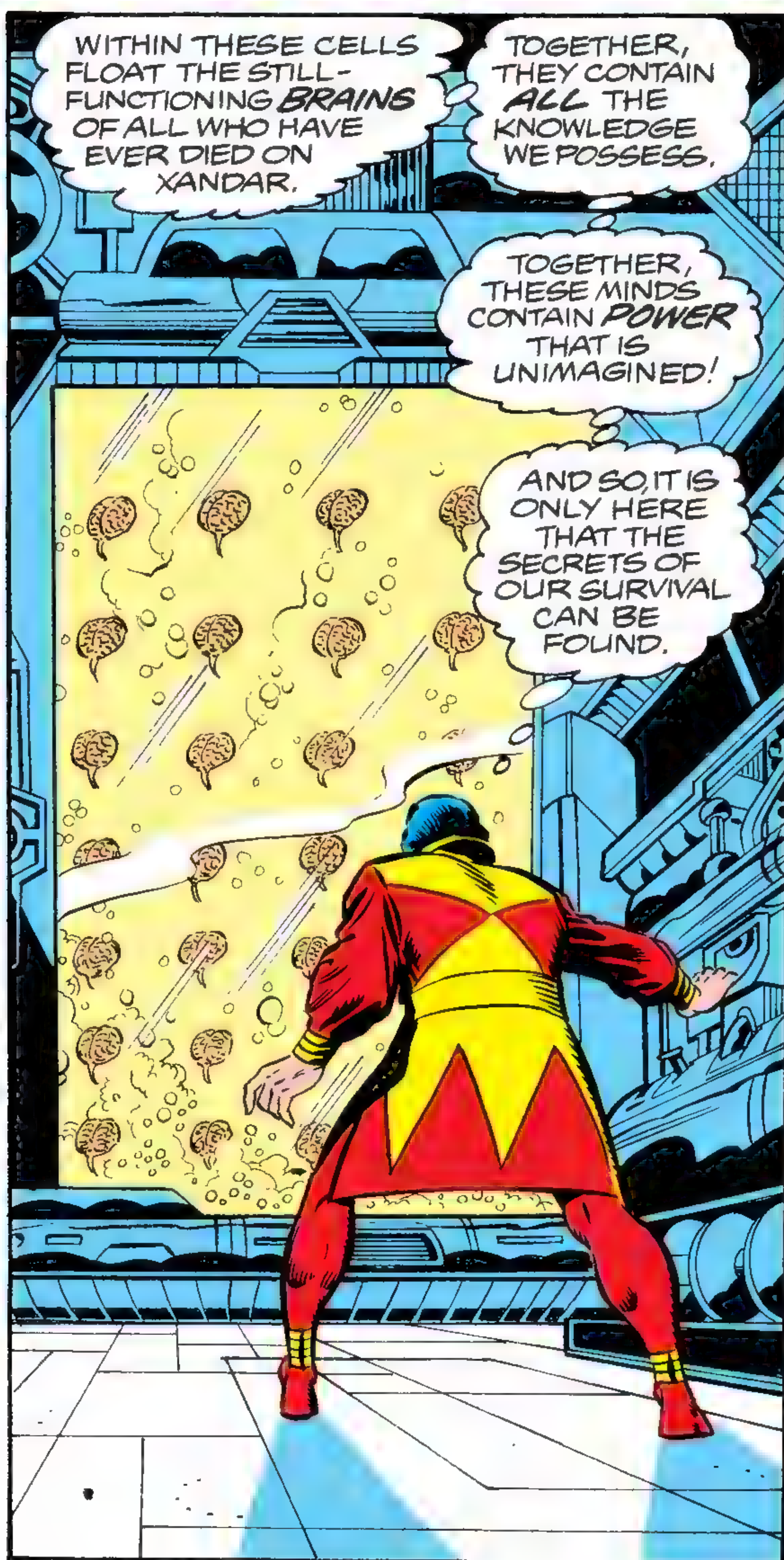
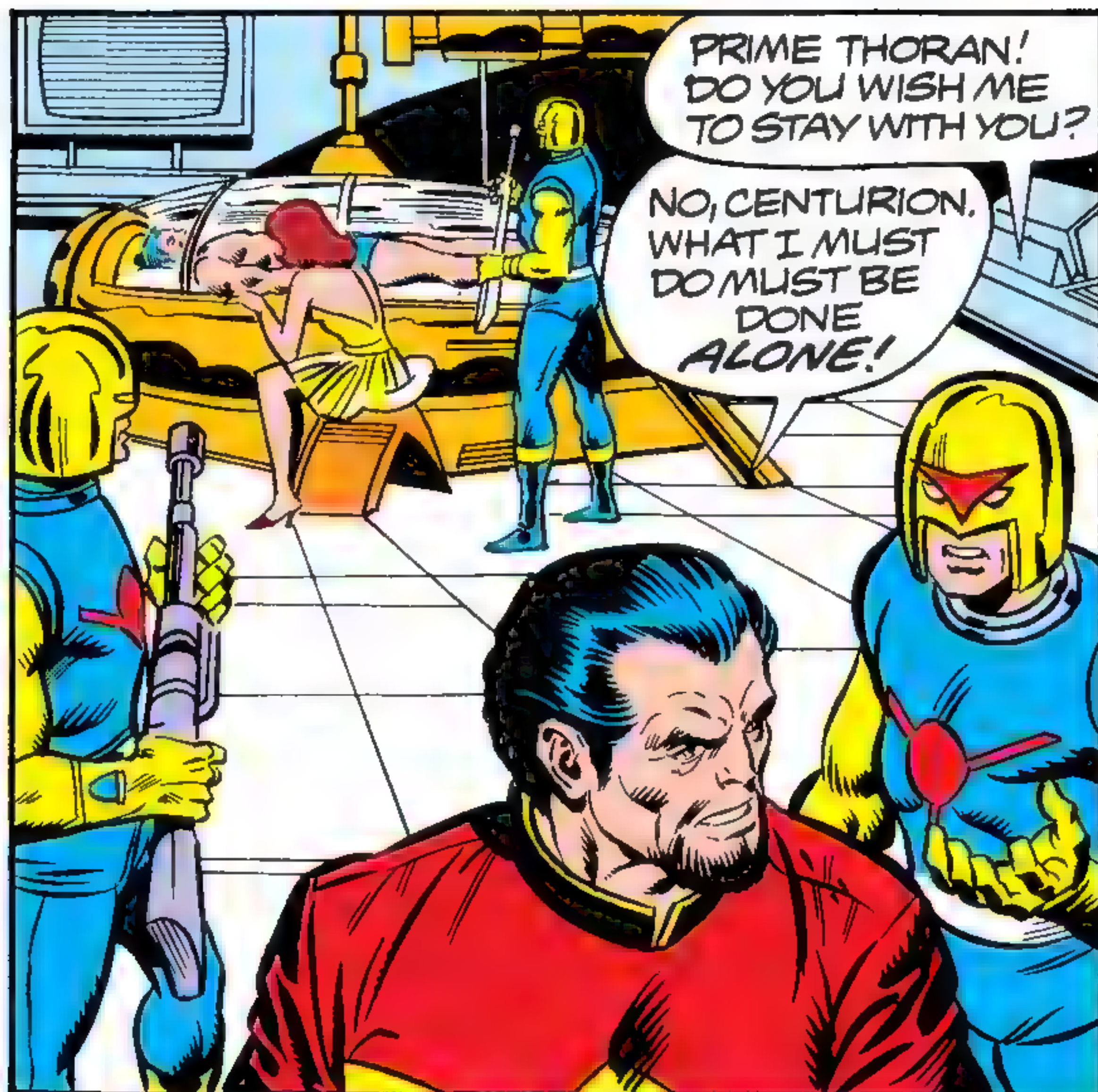
I DARE... ARE YOU SKRULL ENOUGH TO **DO** SOMETHING ABOUT MY INSUBORDINATION?

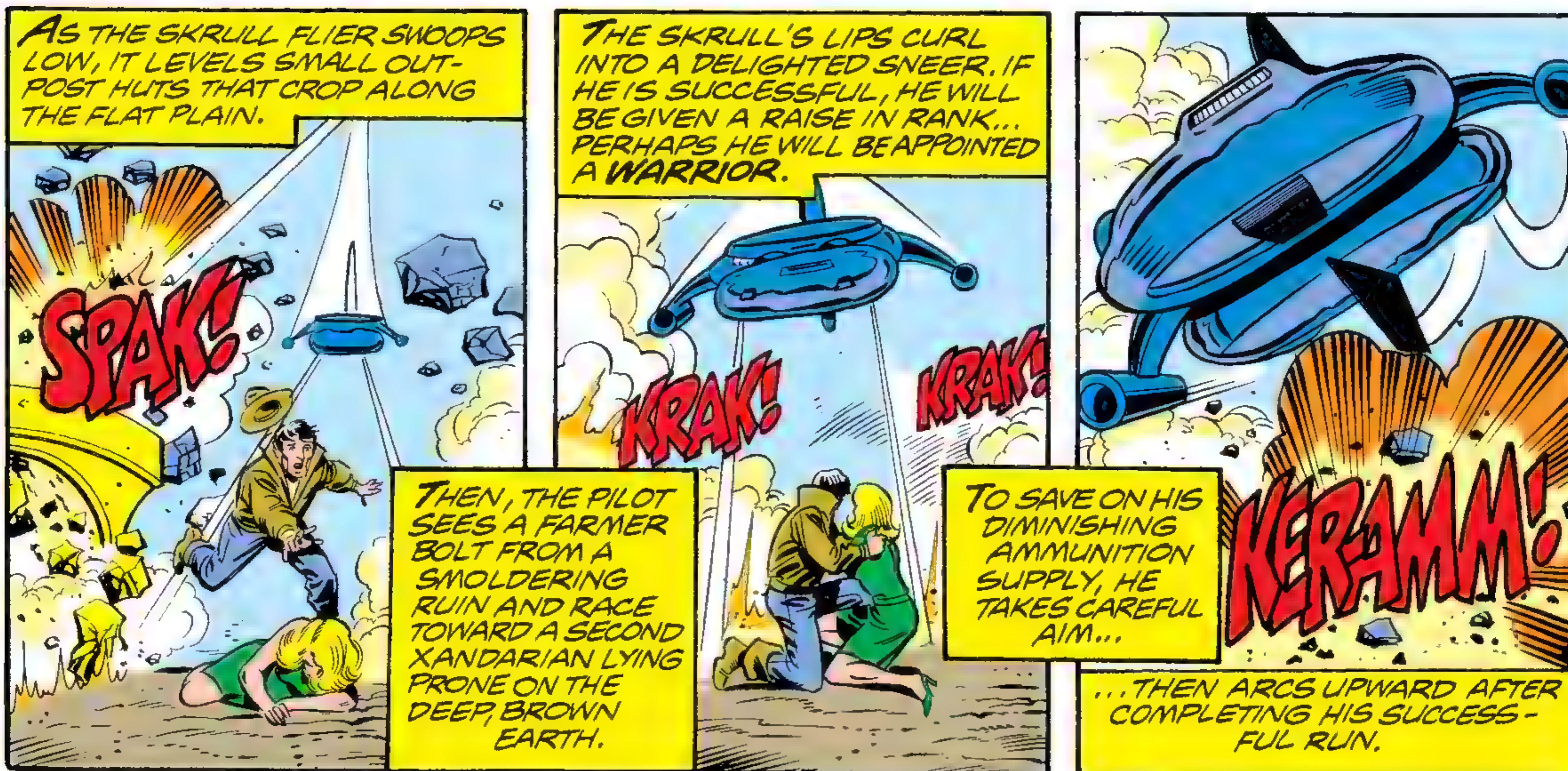
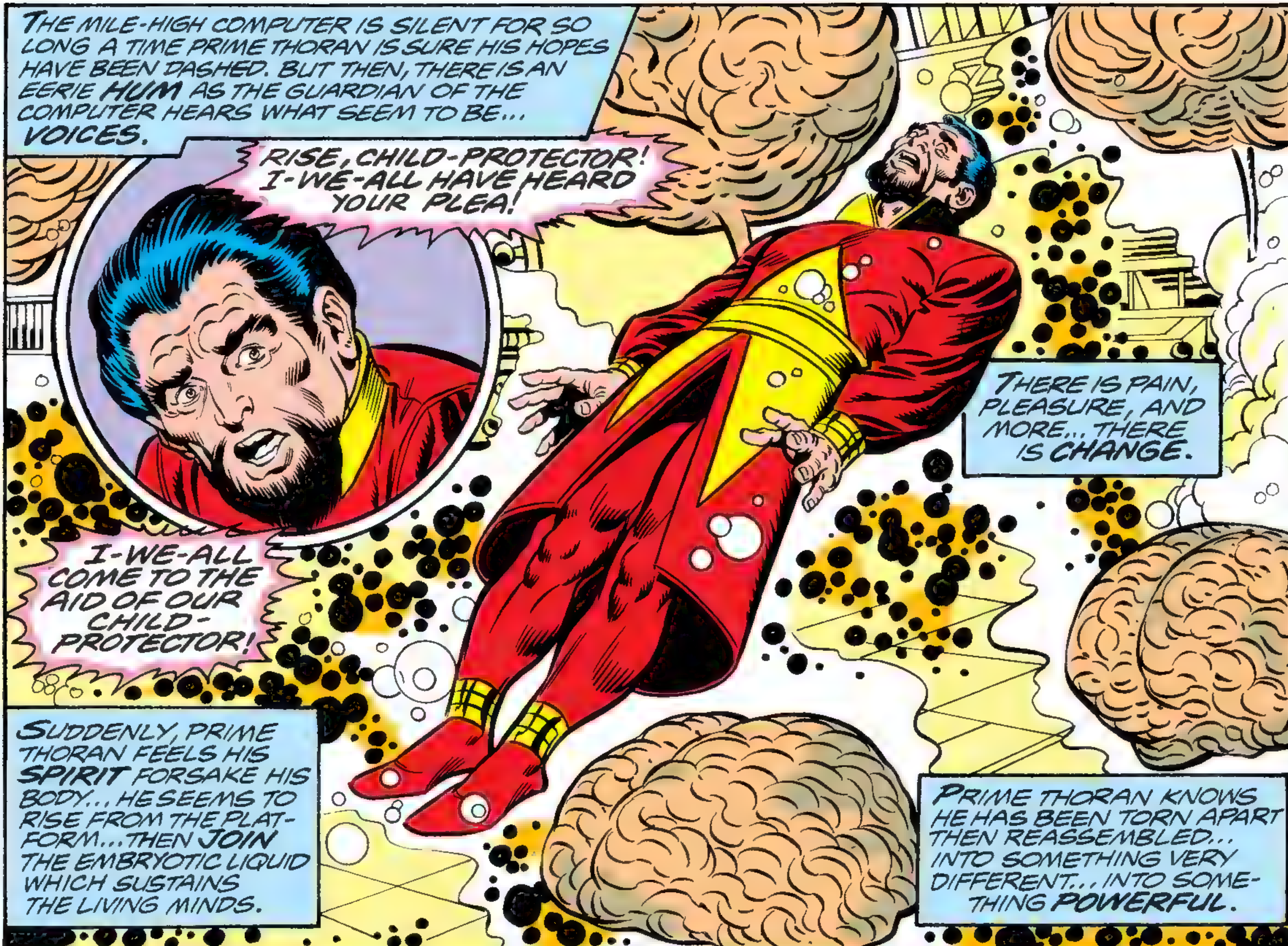
OR WILL YOU GO CRAWL INTO YOUR CORNER AS ALWAYS? EH?



WHILE, ON THE BATTLEGROUND BELOW, ONE WOMAN'S THOUGHTS ARE CONCERNED NOT WITH THE ALIEN ATTACK THAT RENDS HER WORLD...







MEANWHILE, ON THE SKRULL HOMEWORLD, THREE UNCONSCIOUS FIGURES FINALLY STIR BACK TO LIFE...

CRIPES! WHAT IN SAM HILL HIT ME?

MY HEAD FEELS LIKE GALACTUS BOOGIED ALL OVER IT!

STRETCH?!?
YER ALIVE?! I-I THOUGHT THEM SKUNKS--

OBVIOUSLY NOT, OLD FRIEND. BUT WHATEVER THEY SHOT ME WITH, IT **PARALYZED** MY NERVOUS SYSTEM.

I'M STILL TERRIBLY WEAK... CAN BARELY FORCE OPEN MY EYES.

REED?
THANK HEAVEN! YOU'RE BOTH STILL ALIVE! BUT HOW--? THE SKRULLS SAID THEY **KILLED** YOU--

AND WE HAVE, YOU MISERABLE LITTLE DOG. YOU SEE, WE SKRULLS DO NOT BELIEVE IN PAINLESS EXECUTIONS!

YOU WERE SHOT WITH A **METABOLIC BOOSTER!**

IT IS DESIGNED TO **AGE** YOU AT AN INCREDIBLY RAPID RATE.

IN **THREE DAYS** YOU MAGGOTS WILL PERISH OF OLD AGE!

YOU CRUMMY--

ZWAK

BACK, YOU FILTH-- OR YOU WILL DIE **NOW!**

HE'S NOT MOVING! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO BEN?

BAH! I MERELY SHOT HIM WITH A **STASIS BEAM!** IT WILL WEAR OFF MOMENTARILY.

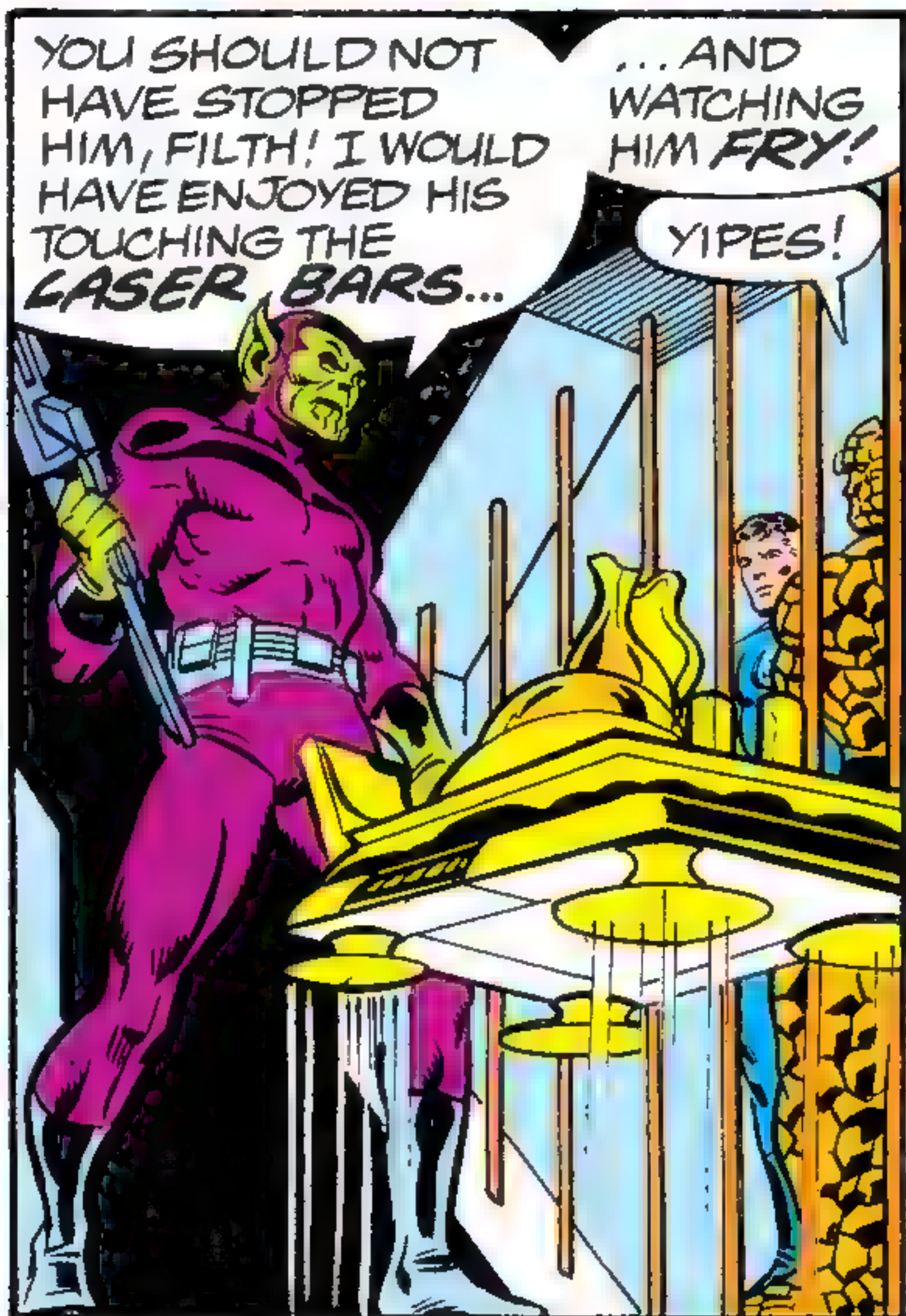
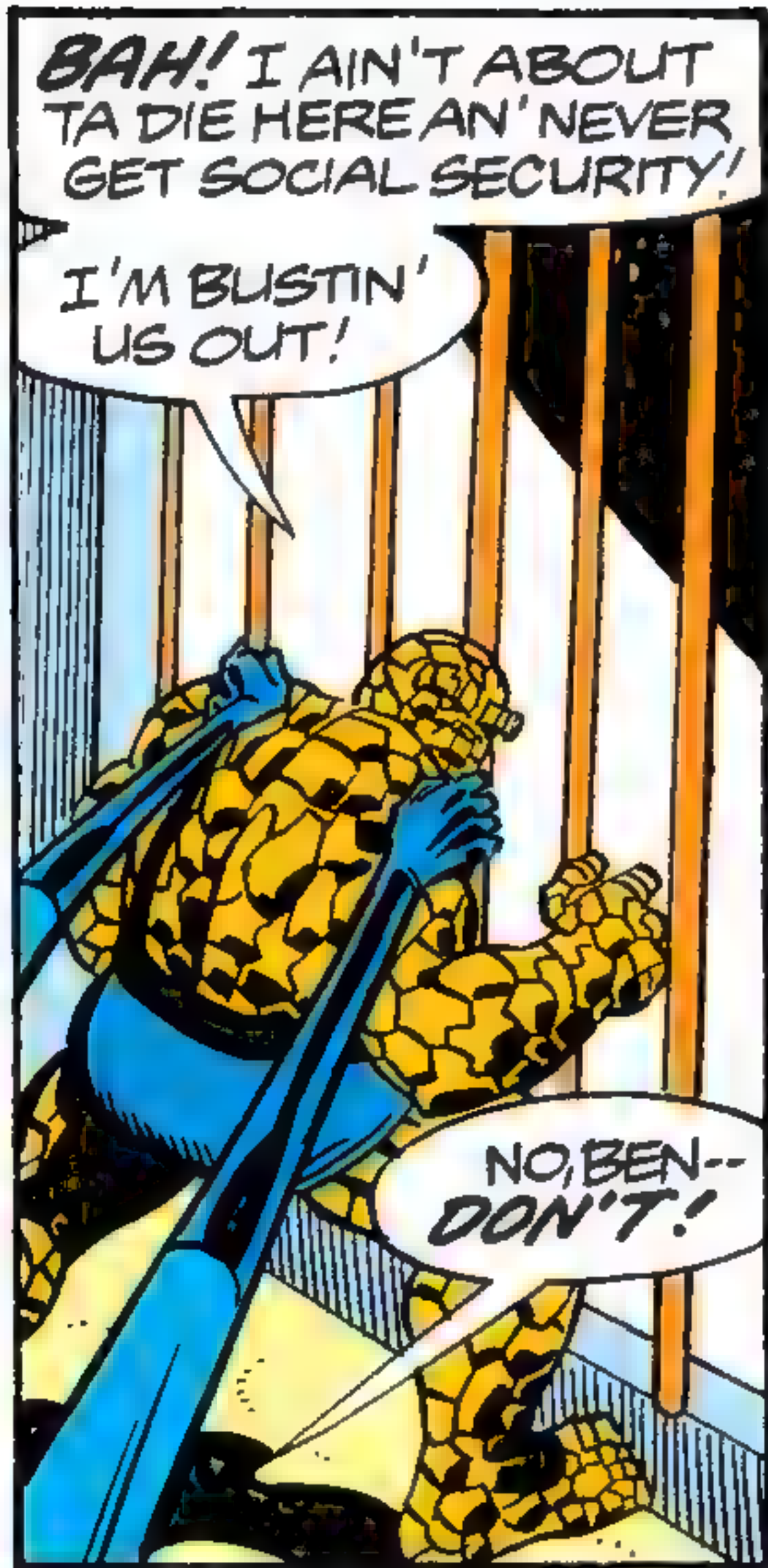
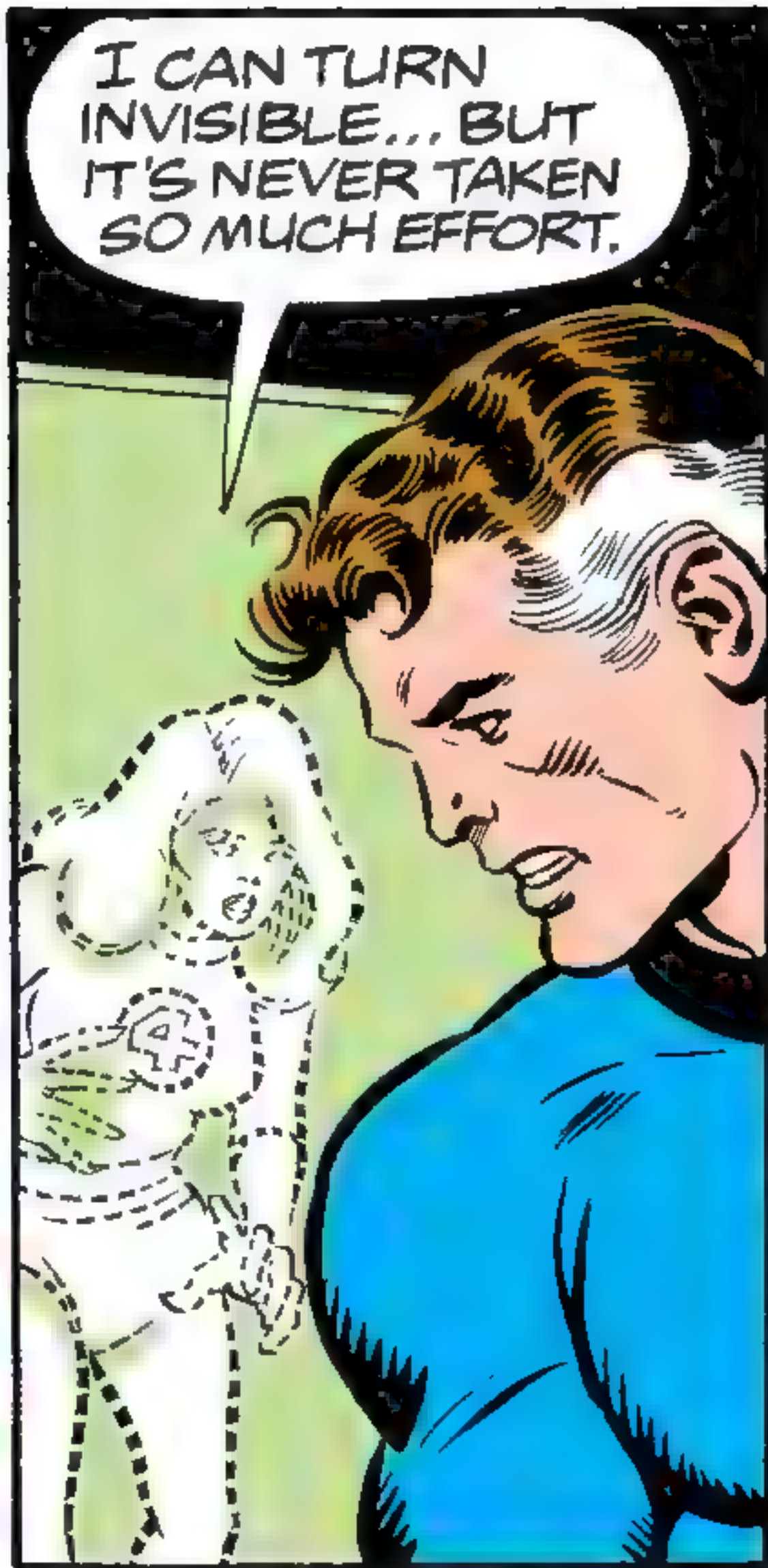
LOOK! HE'S ALREADY BEGINNING TO QUIVER!

HUH? WHERE'D THAT **GREEN SLIME** RUN OFFTA? ONE SEC HE'S HERE, THEN **POOF!**

REED, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US NOW? WE'LL NEVER SEE OUR SON AGAIN!

NO, SUE. THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE NEVER GIVEN UP HOPE BEFORE... WE'RE NOT STARTING NOW.

IF THERE'S A WAY OUT OF THIS, SO HELP ME-- **I'LL FIND IT!**



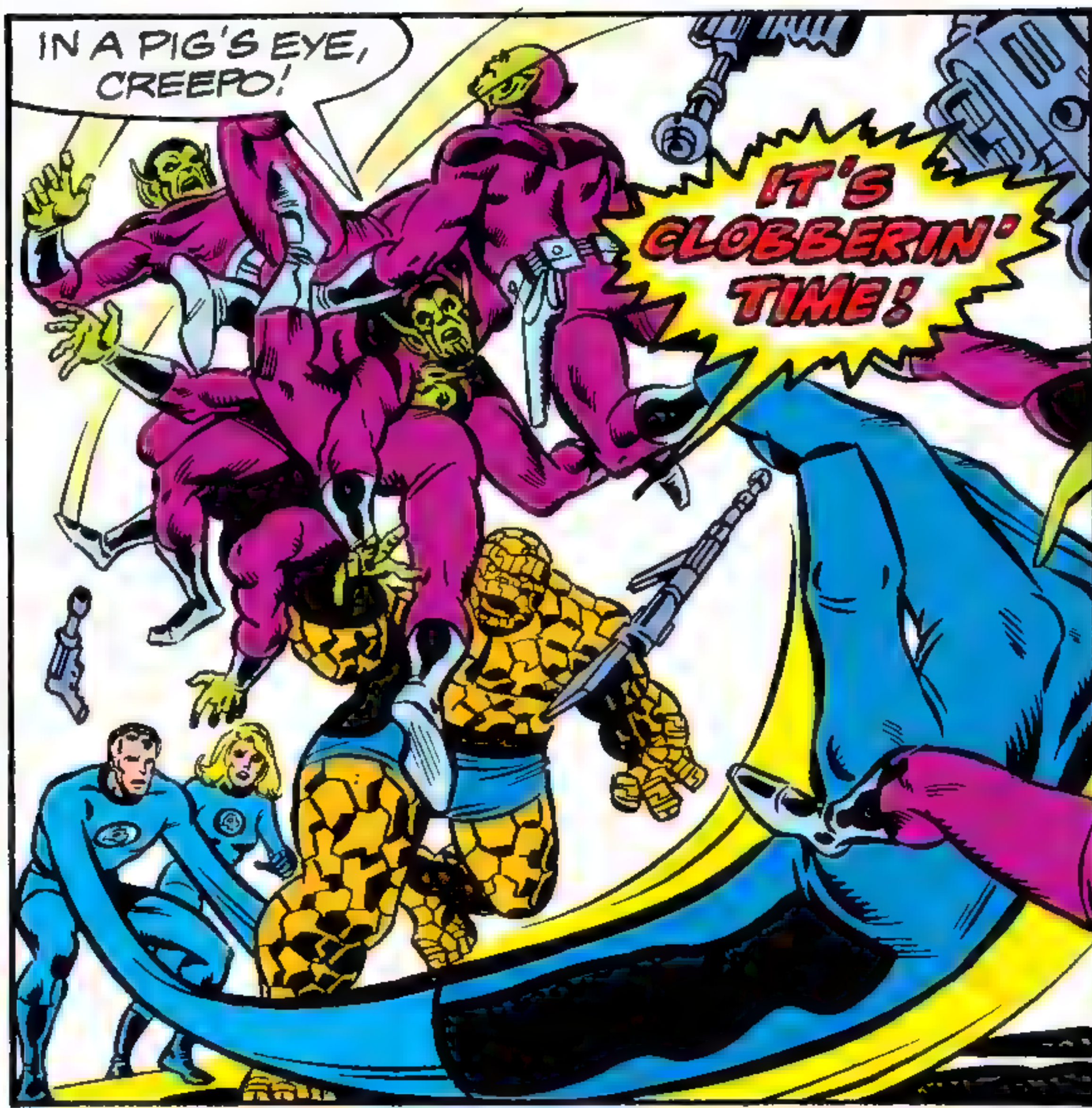


THEN THEY BETTER START PRAYIN' REAL FAST, BIG-BRAIN.

WE AIN'T SKEE-DADDLIN' OUTTA HERE WITHOUT A FIGHT!

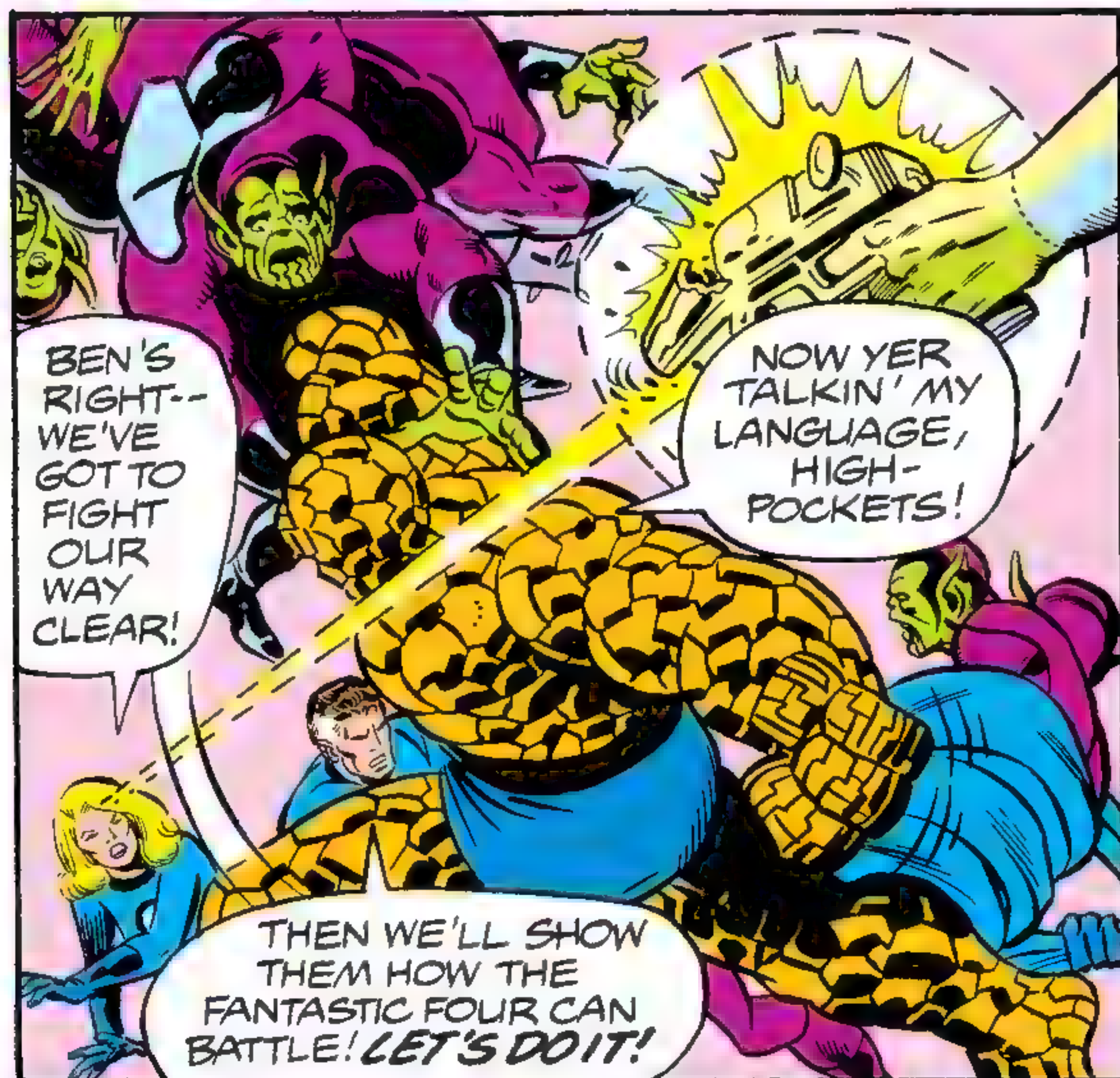
BY THE SARGAS-SOS OF SERIUS! THE DUNG-DOGS ARE ESCAPING!

DESTROY THEM! NOW!



IN A PIG'S EYE, CREEPO!

IT'S GLOBBERIN' TIME!



BEN'S RIGHT-- WE'VE GOT TO FIGHT OUR WAY CLEAR!

NOW YER TALKIN' MY LANGUAGE, HIGH-POCKETS!

THEN WE'LL SHOW THEM HOW THE FANTASTIC FOUR CAN BATTLE! LET'S DO IT!

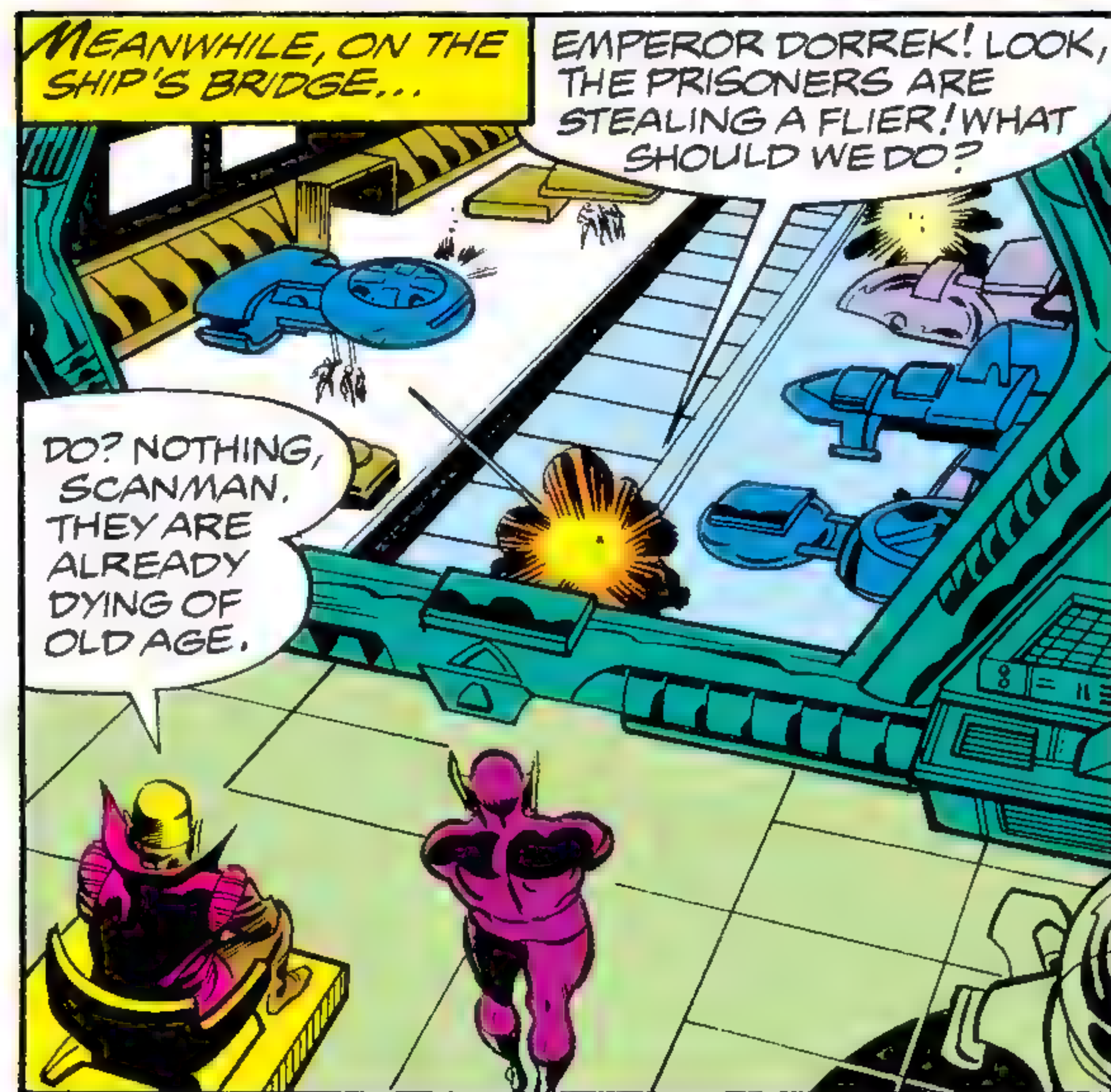


BLUE-EYES IS WINDING UP... HE PITCHES... WOT'LL IT BE--?

SOMEONE-- ANYONE-- STOP HIM!

HE FIGHTS LIKE A DEVIL!

STEE-RIKE THREE! YER ALL OUT!



MEANWHILE, ON THE SHIP'S BRIDGE...

EMPEROR DORREK! LOOK, THE PRISONERS ARE STEALING A FLIER! WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

DO? NOTHING, SCANMAN. THEY ARE ALREADY DYING OF OLD AGE.

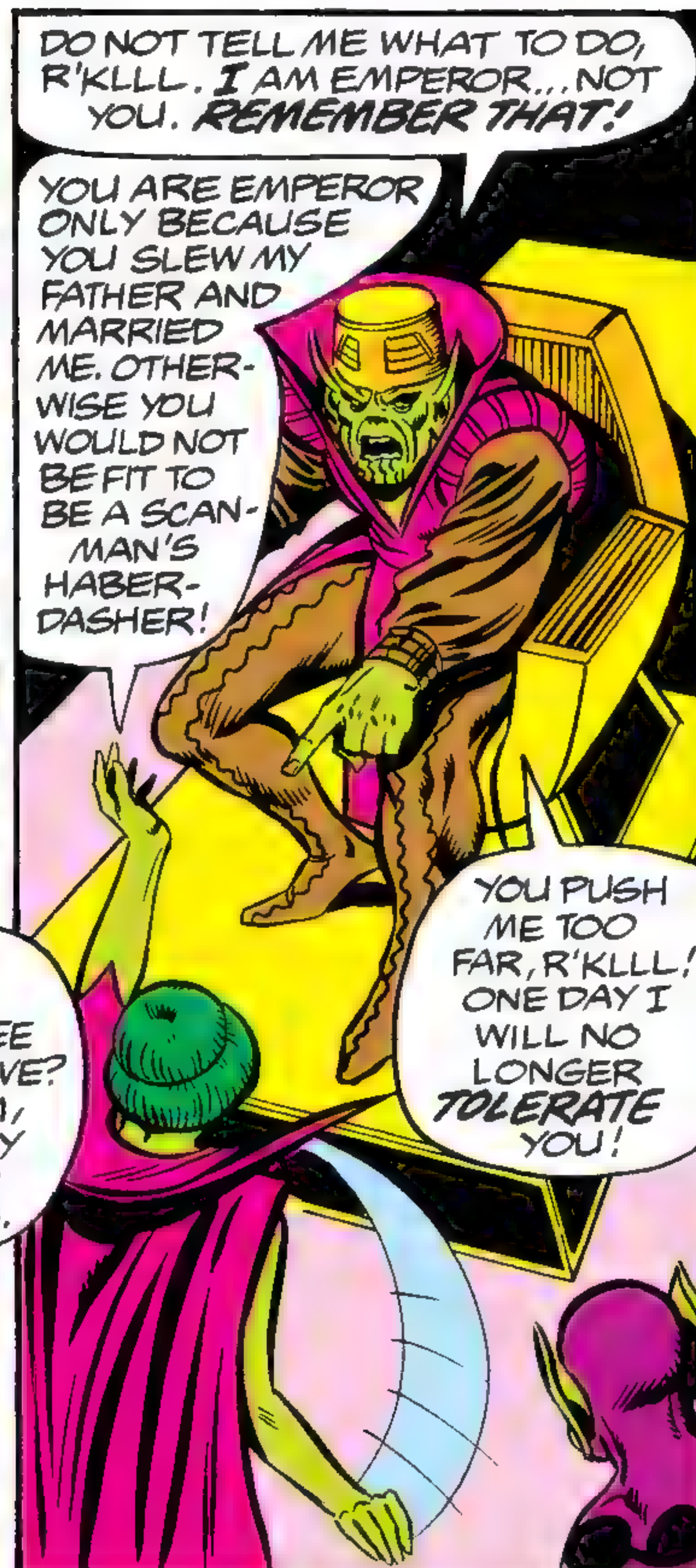
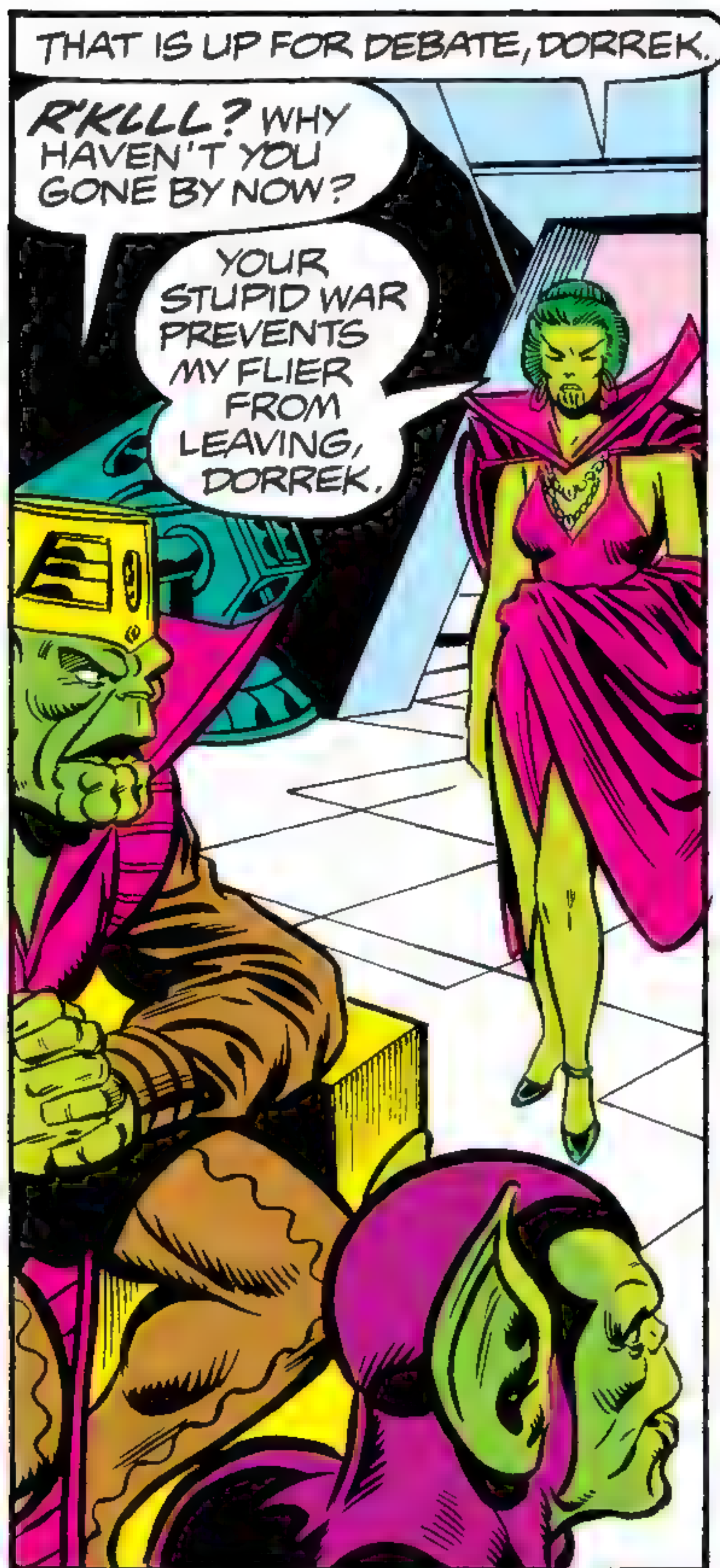


BESIDES, THE SHIP THEY ARE TAKING IS FAULTY... IT WILL EXPLODE LONG BEFORE THEY REACH THEIR ALLIES.

LET THEM BELIEVE THEY CAN ESCAPE US.

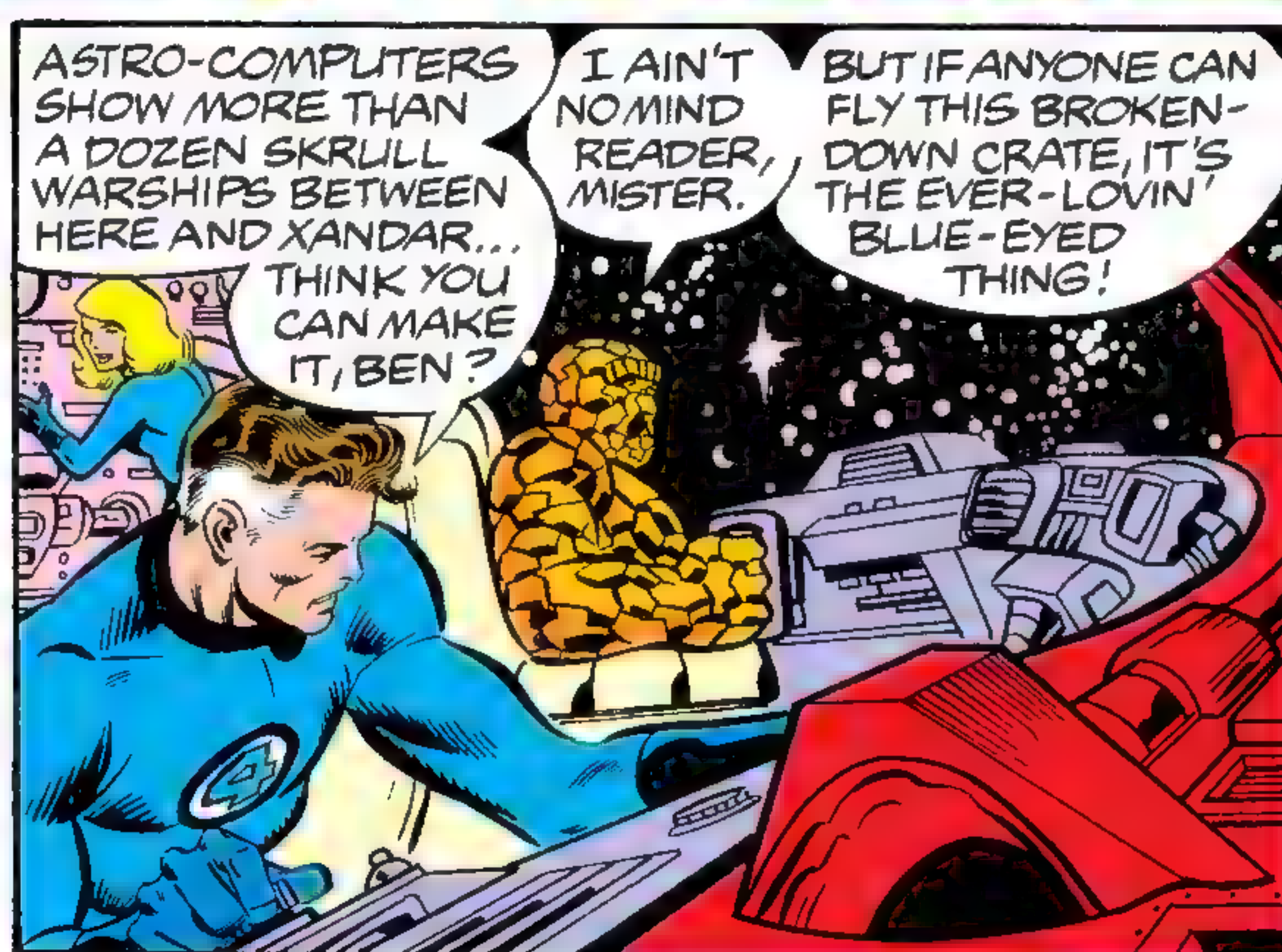
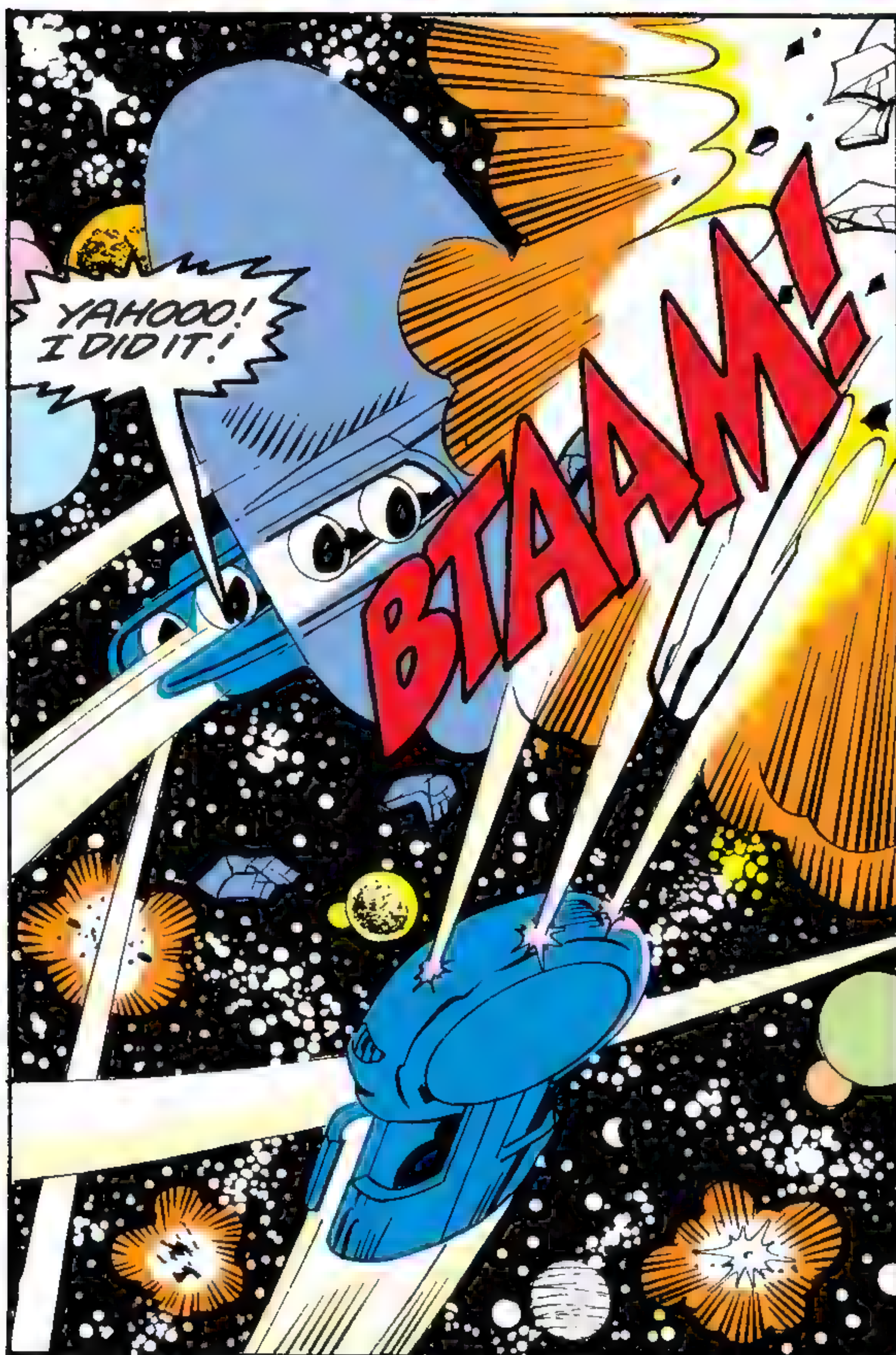
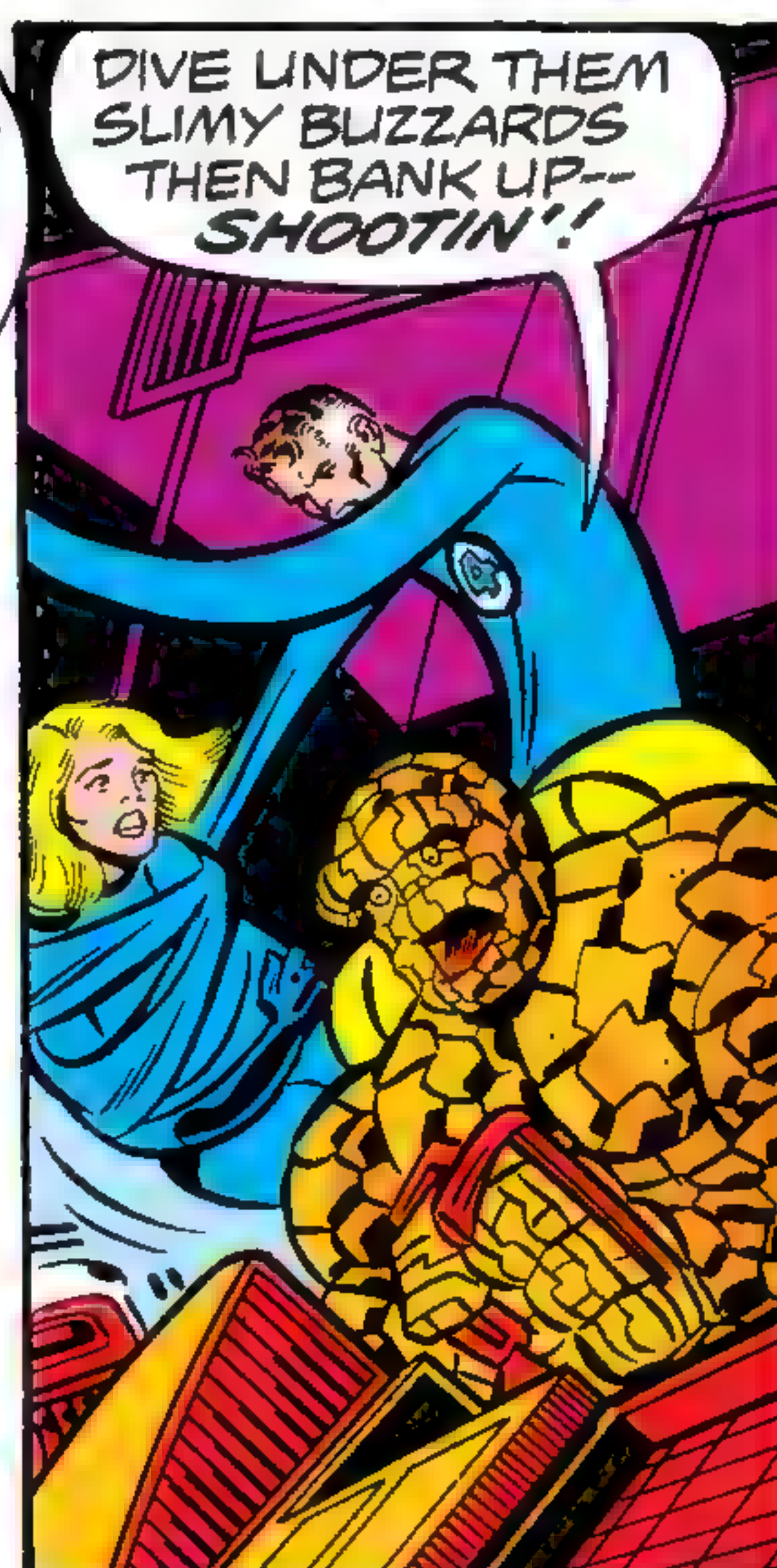
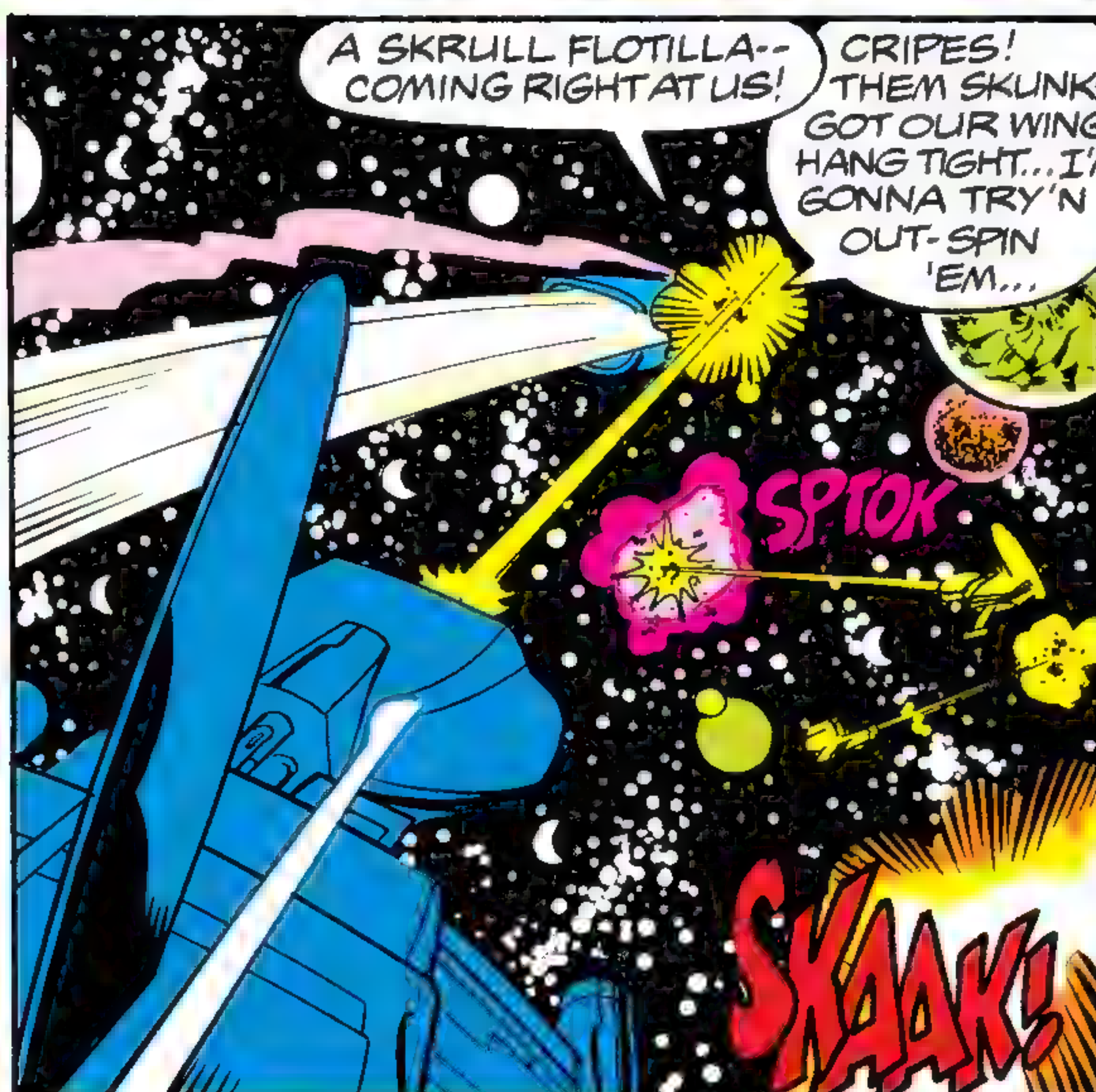
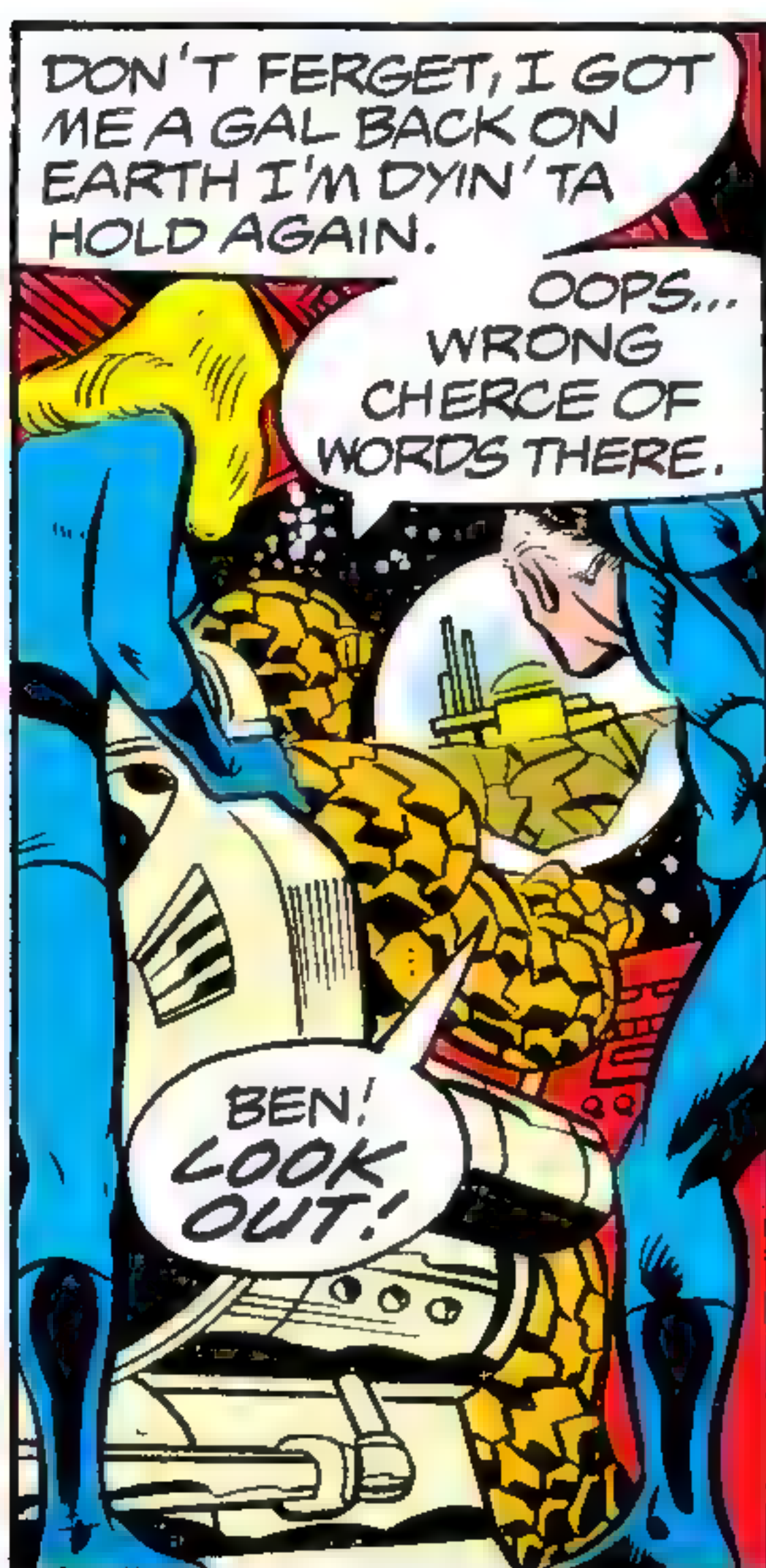
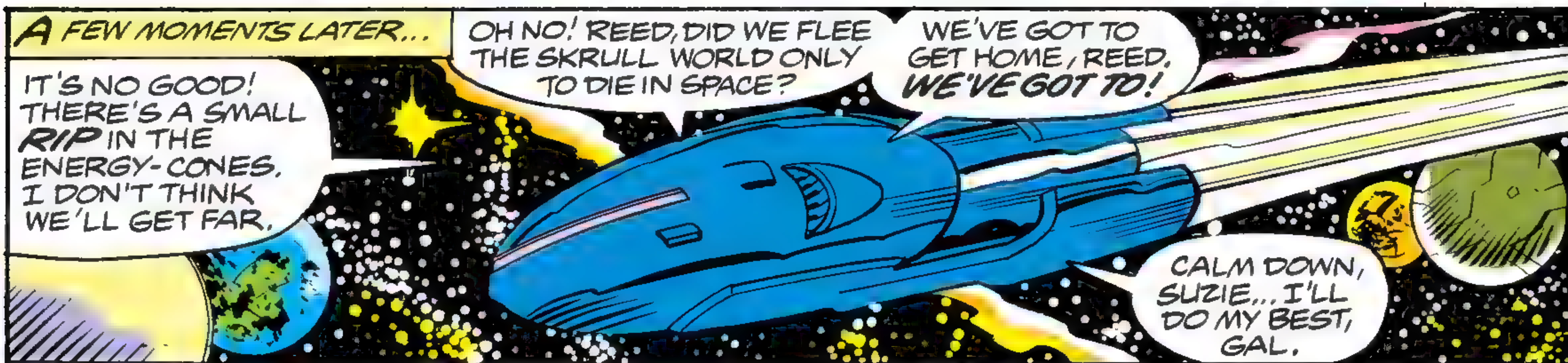
YOU HAVE GREAT WISDOM, SIRE.

OF COURSE, SCANMAN. AM I NOT THE GREATEST EMPEROR OF ALL?

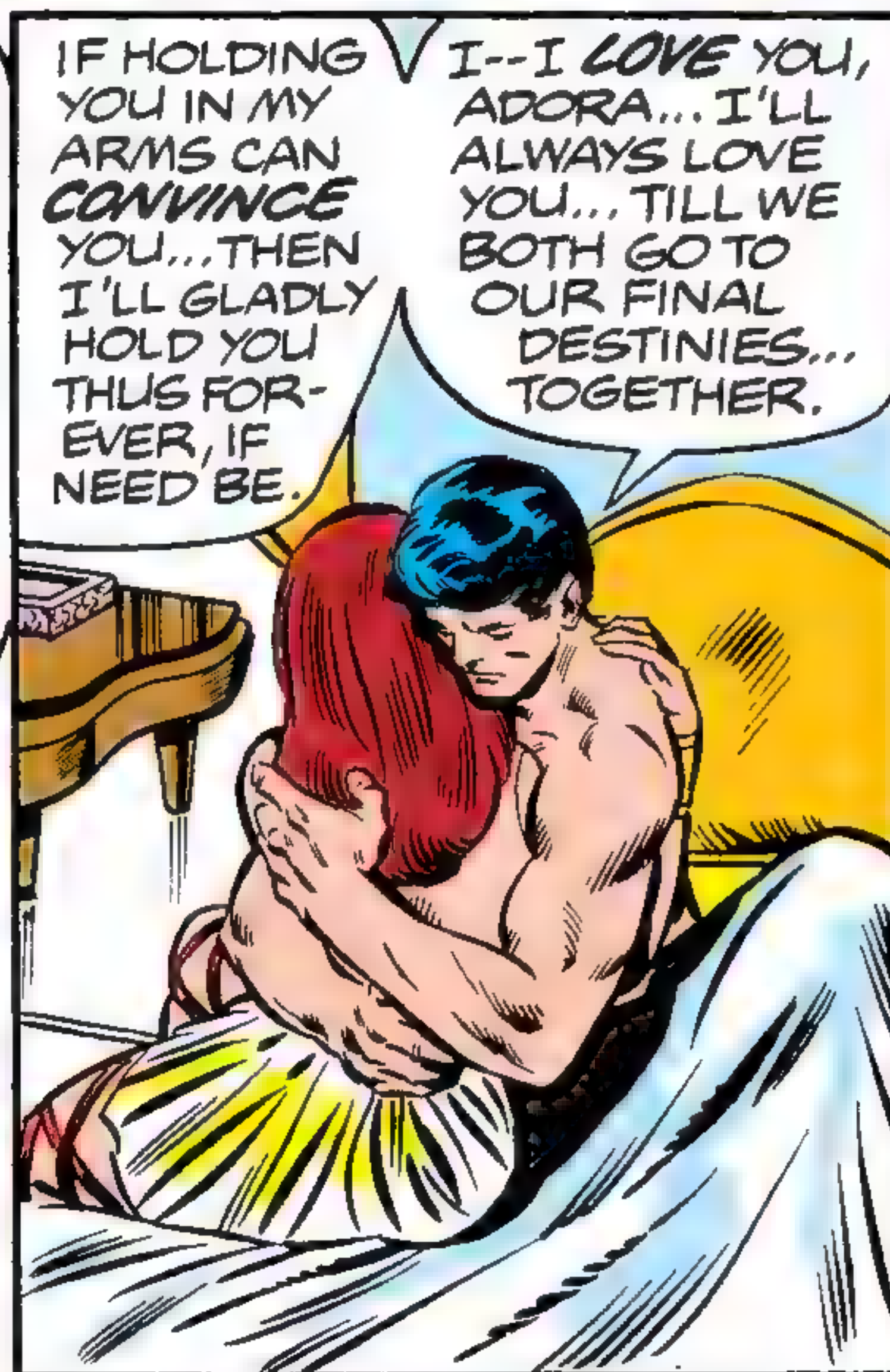
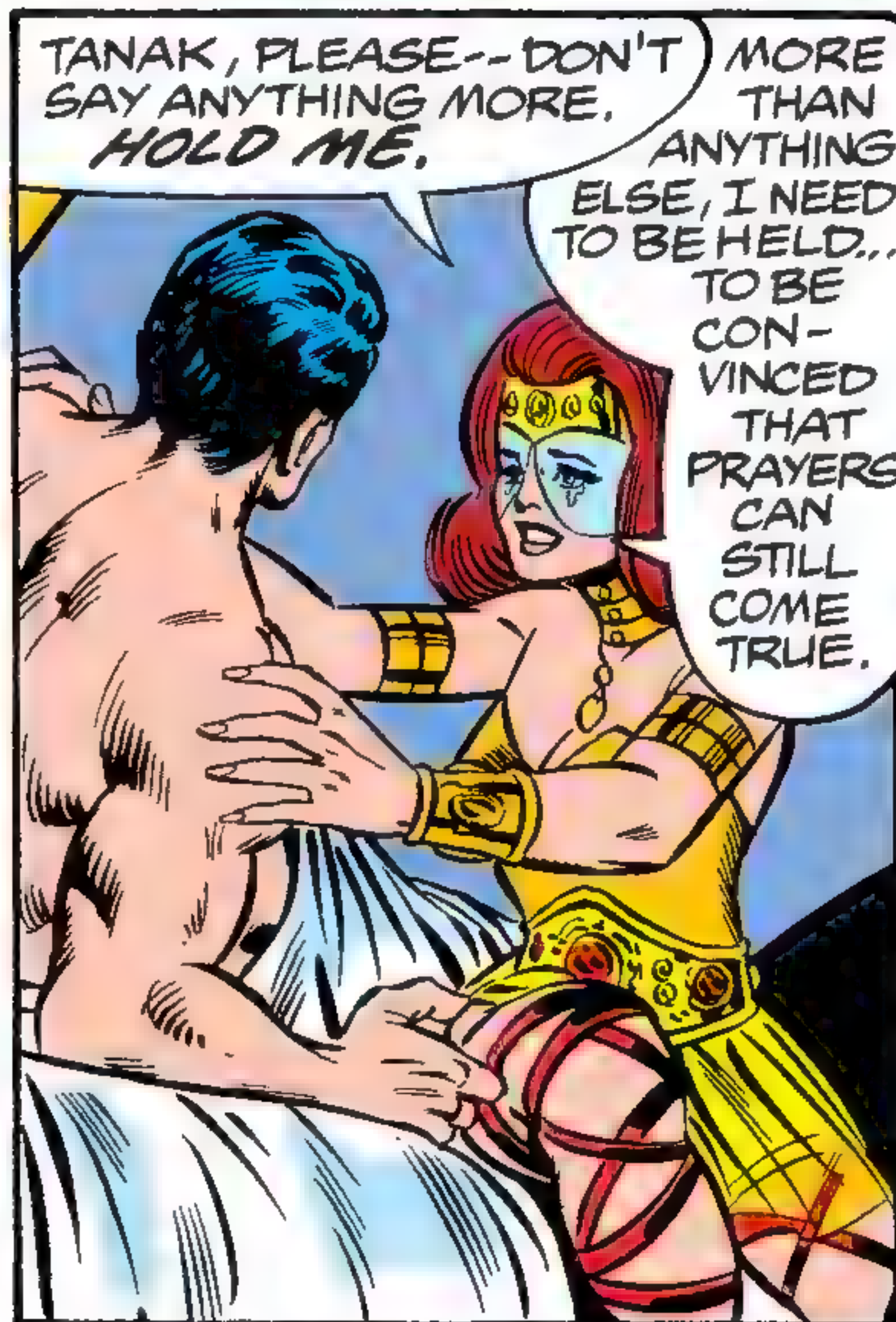
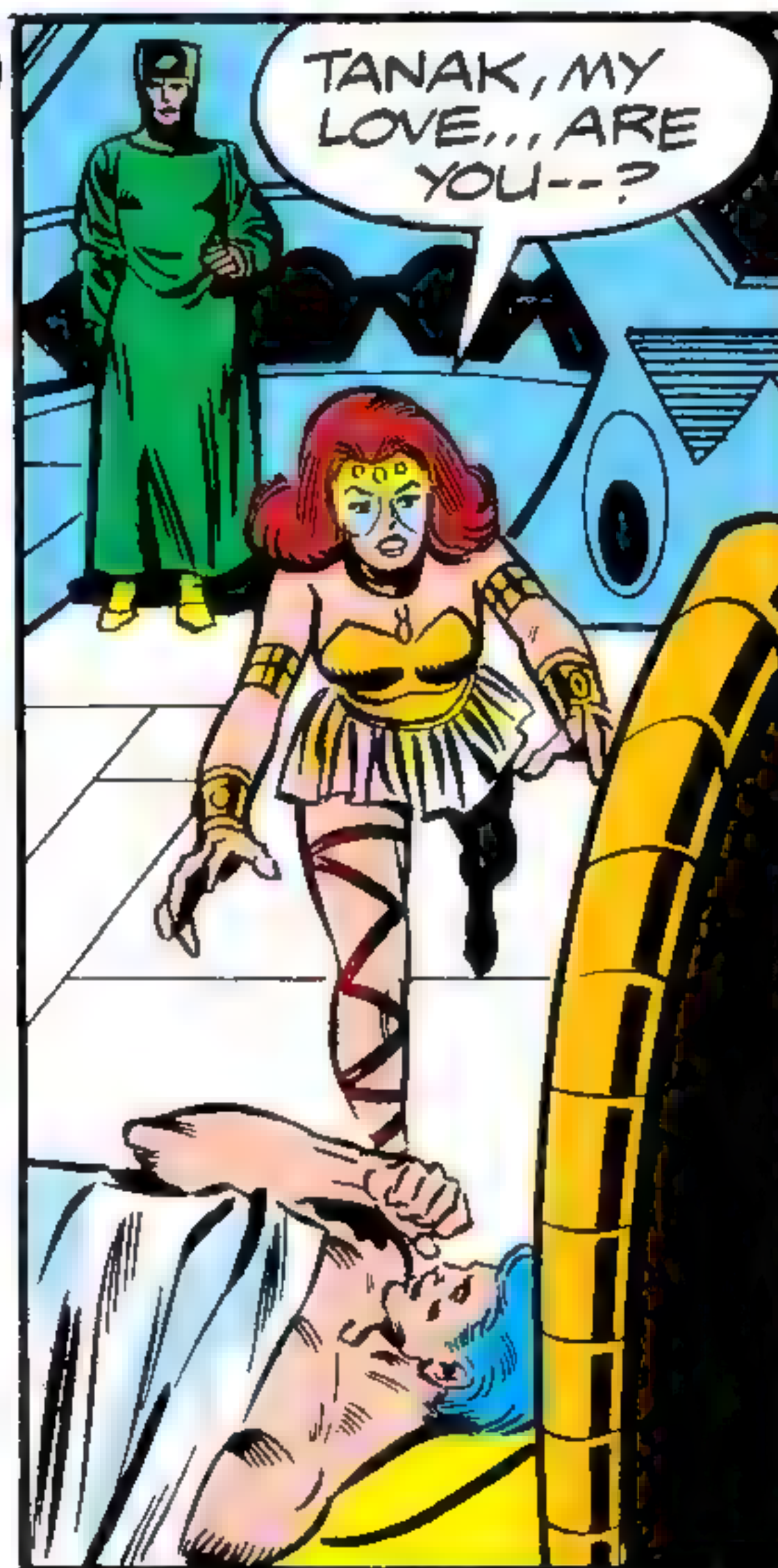
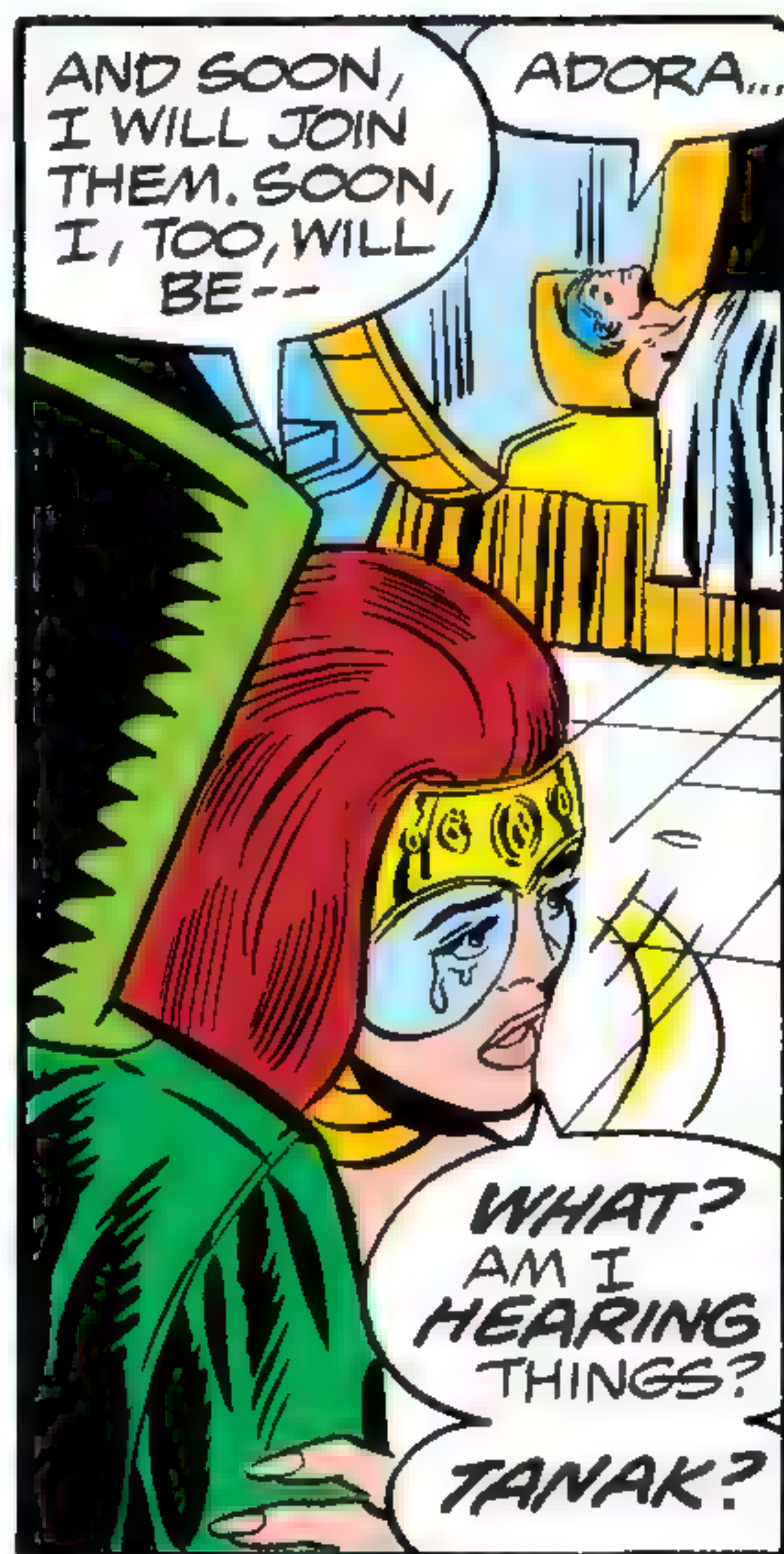
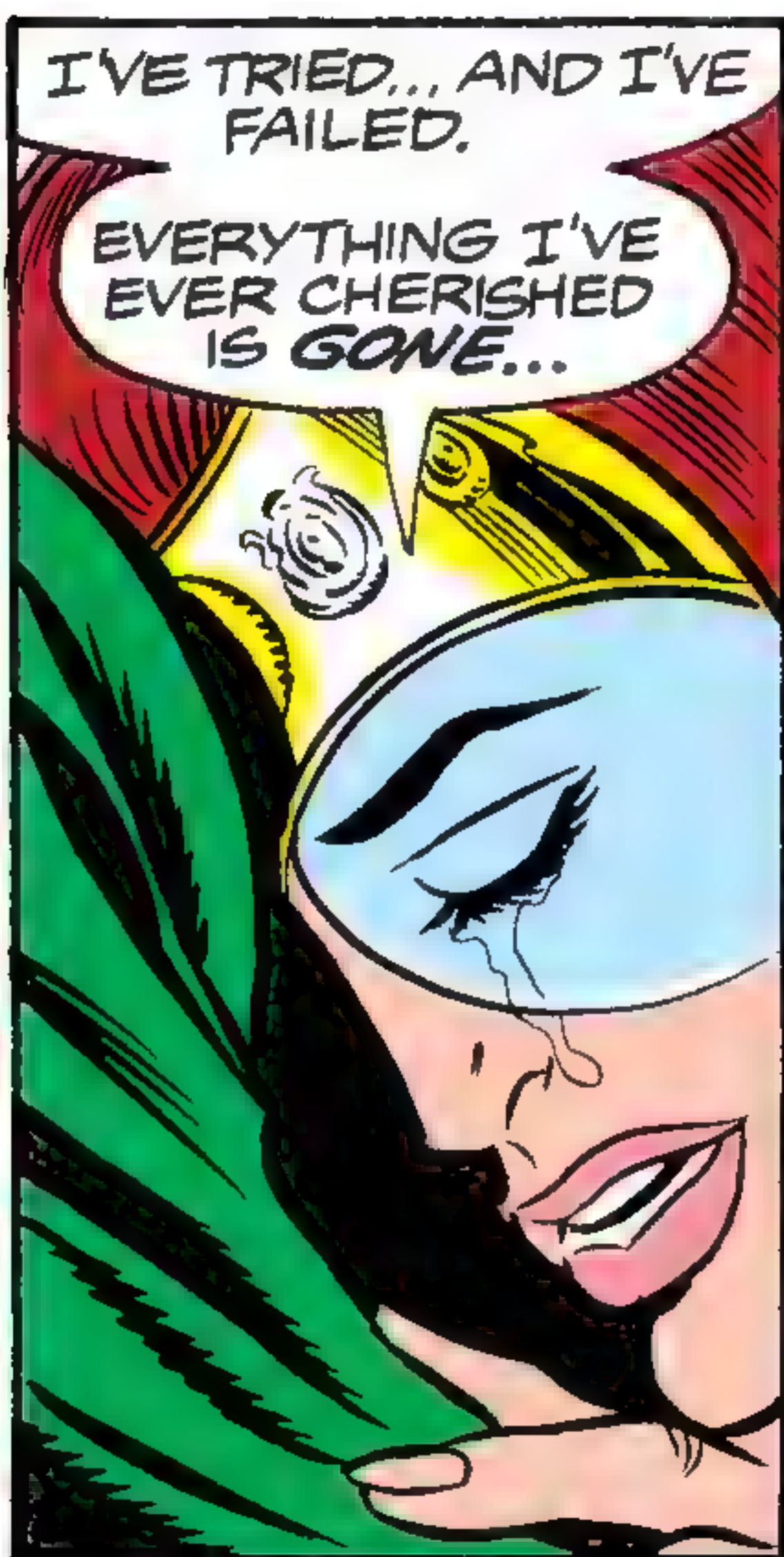
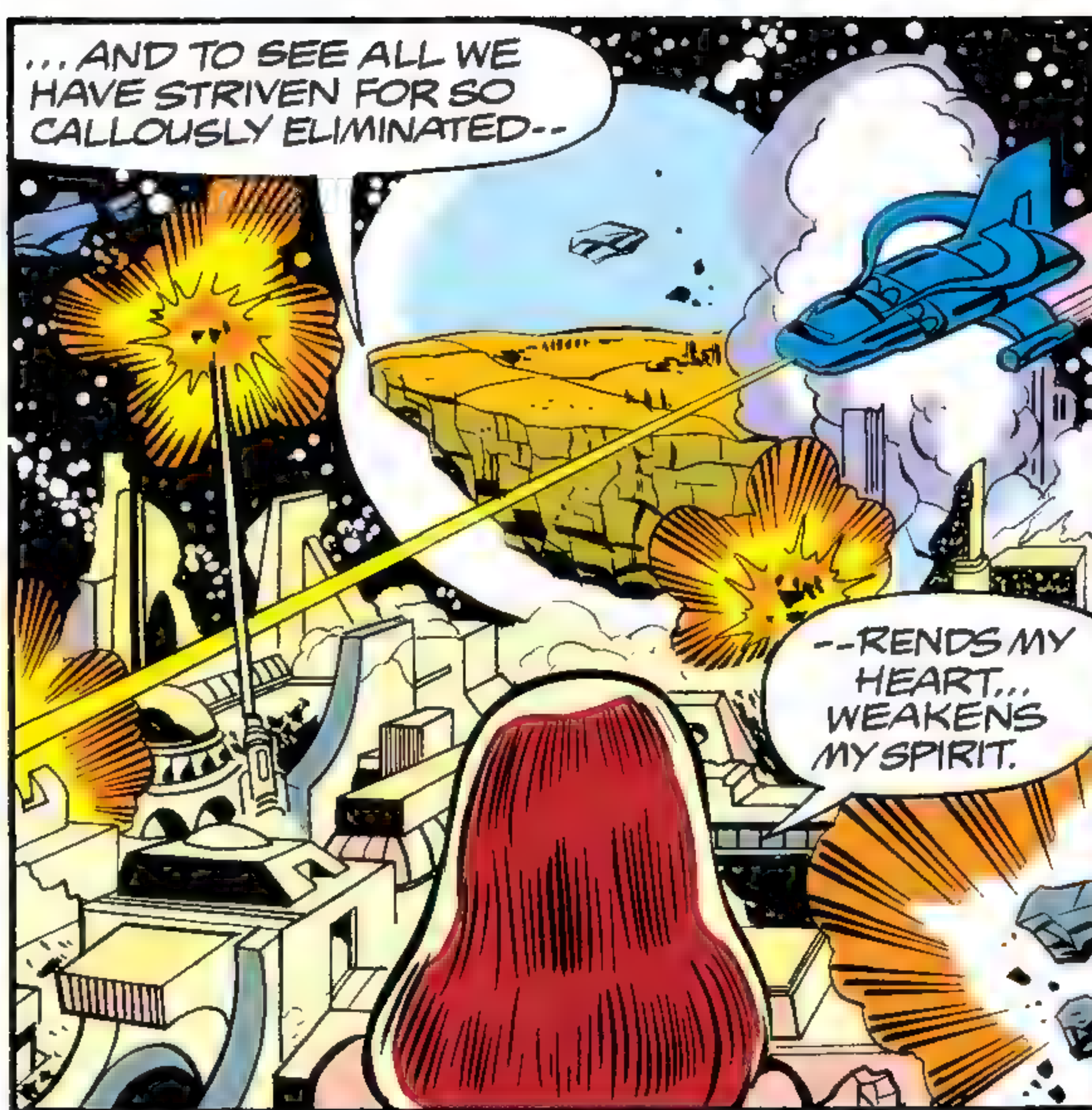
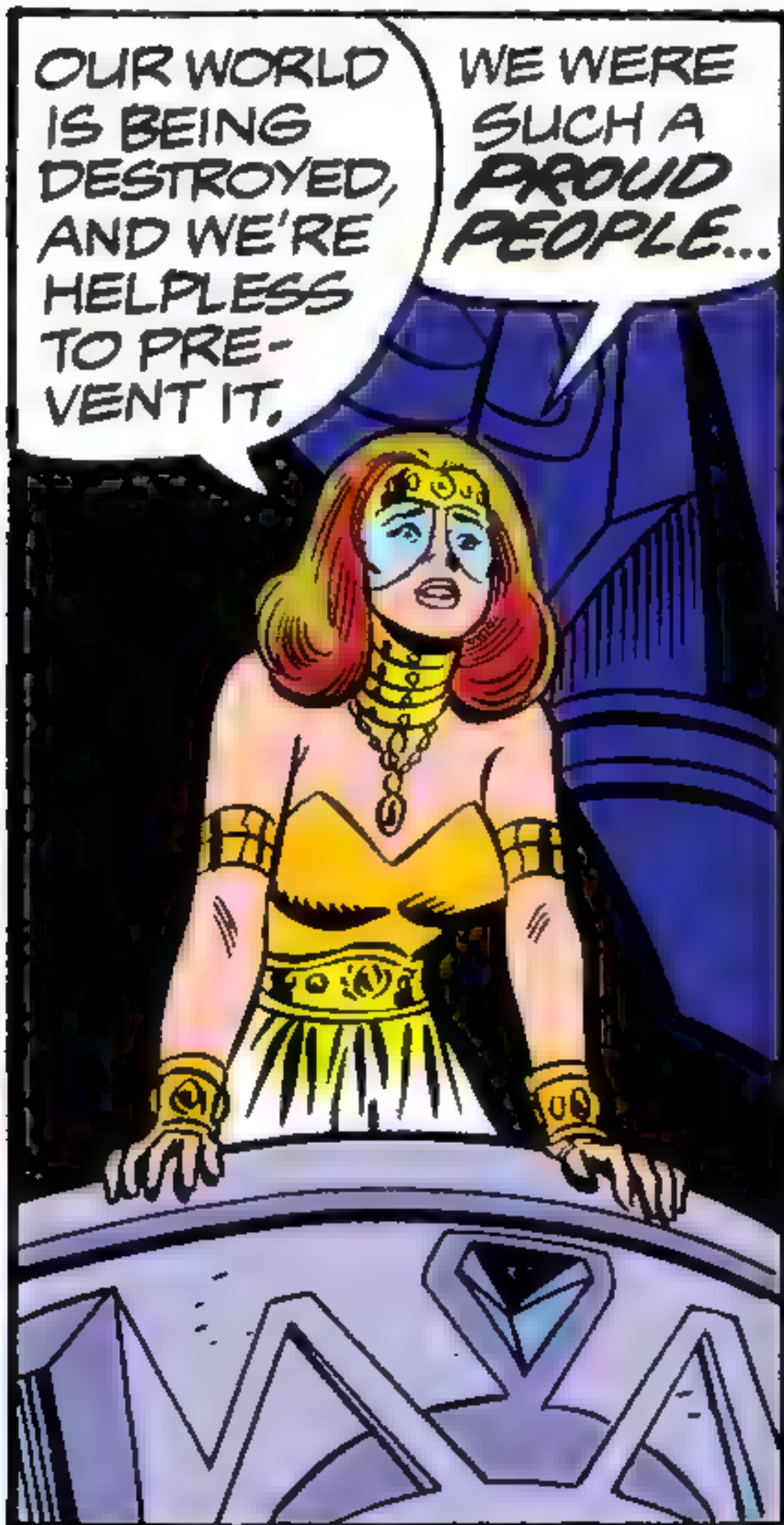


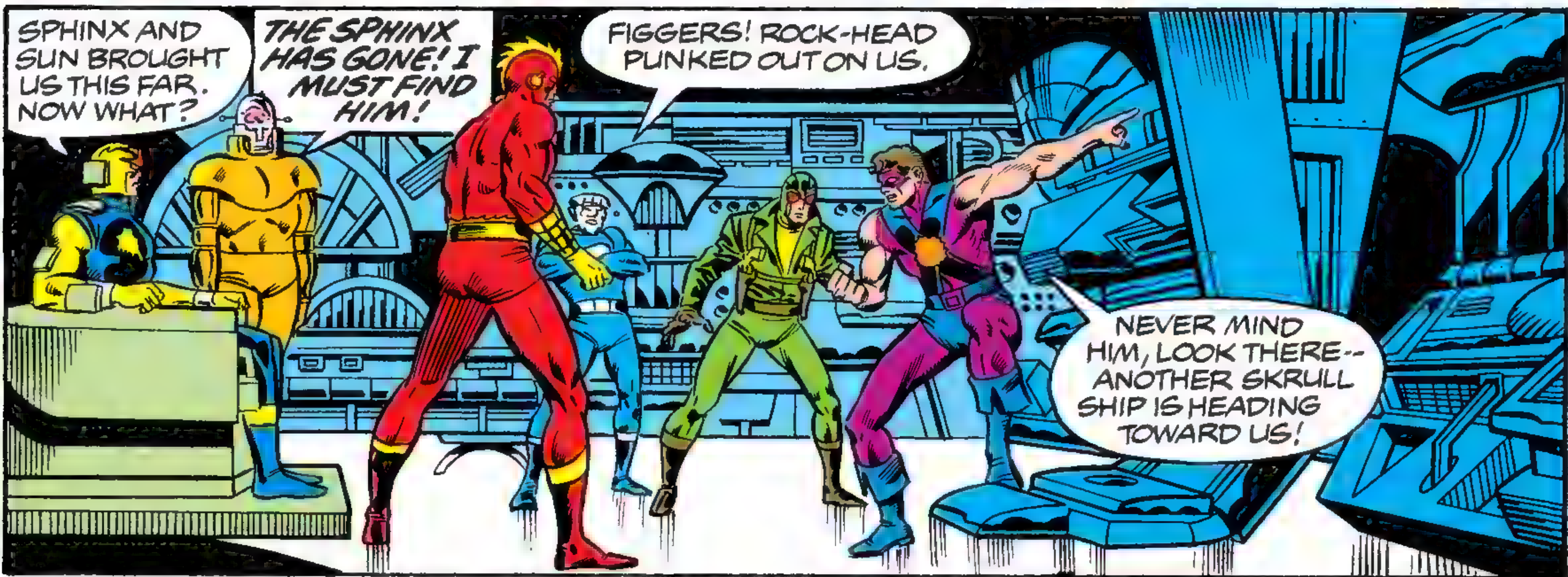
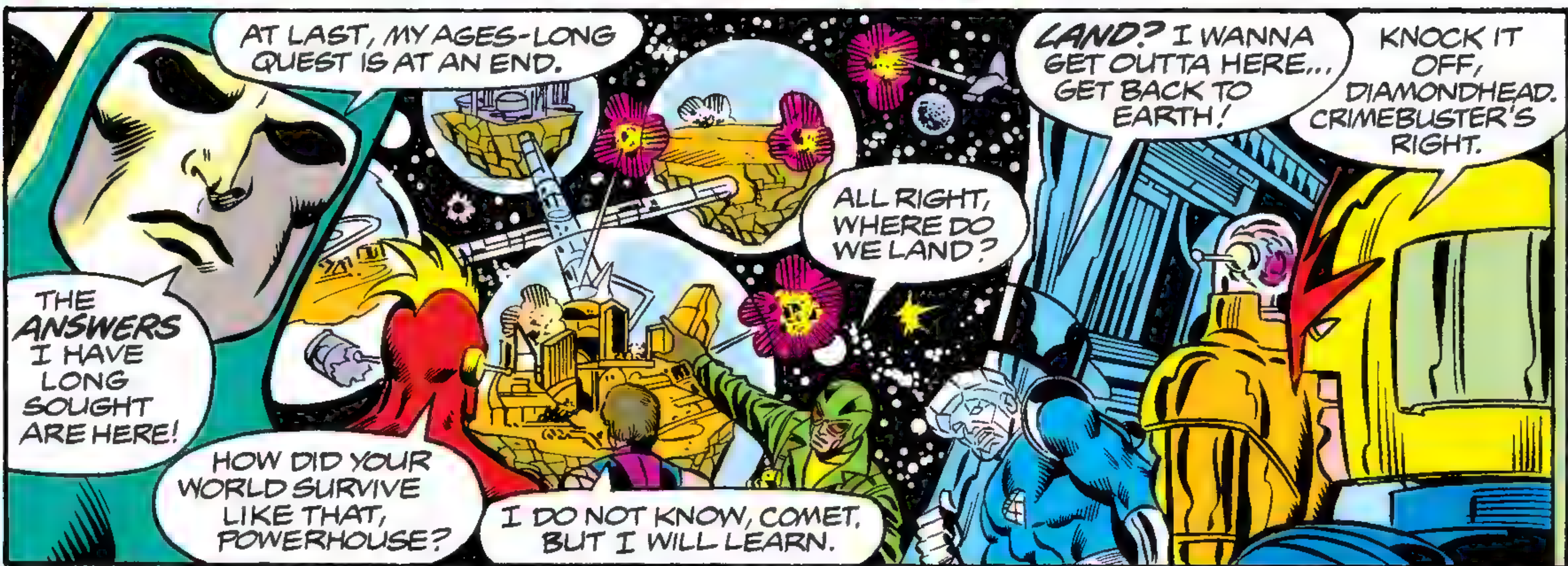
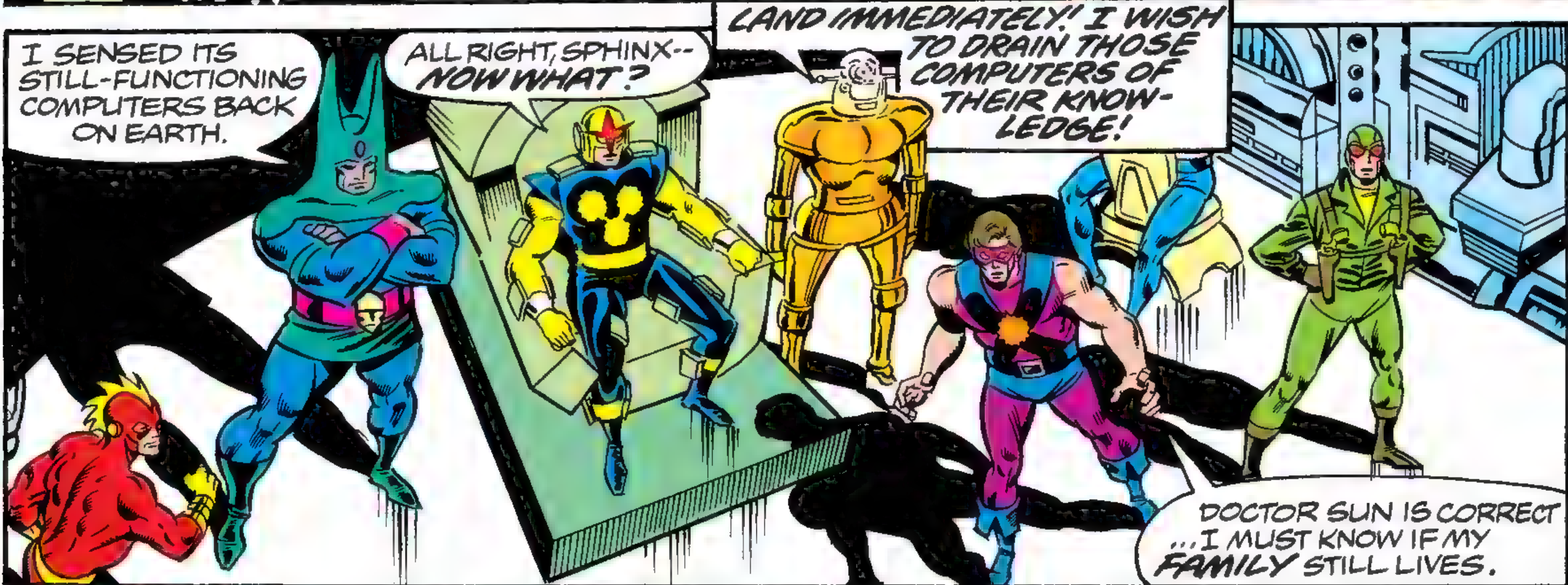
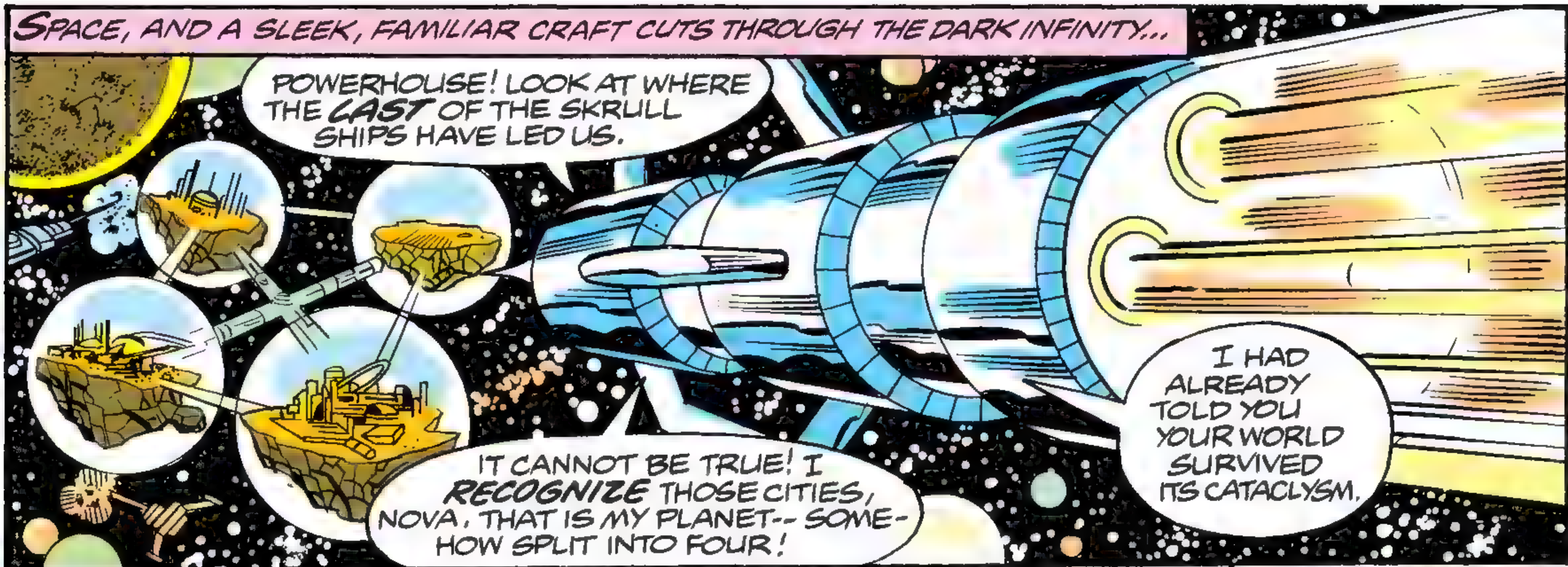
DOUBLE-CROSSING AND MORE DOUBLE-CROSSING. WE'LL GET BACK TO DORREK AND HIS WIFE LATER. BUT FOR NOW, LET'S LOOK IN ON OUR FLEEING THREESOME...

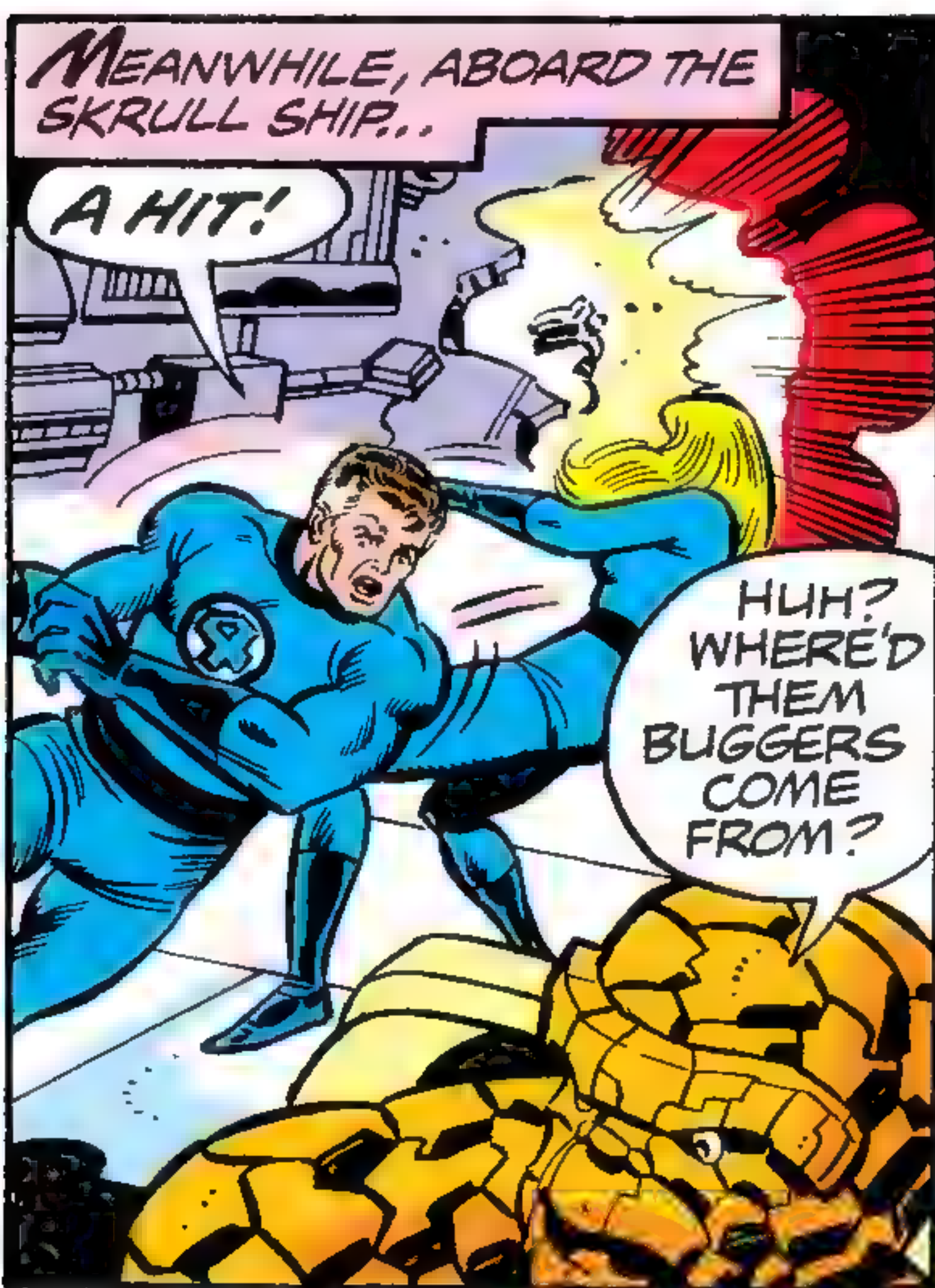
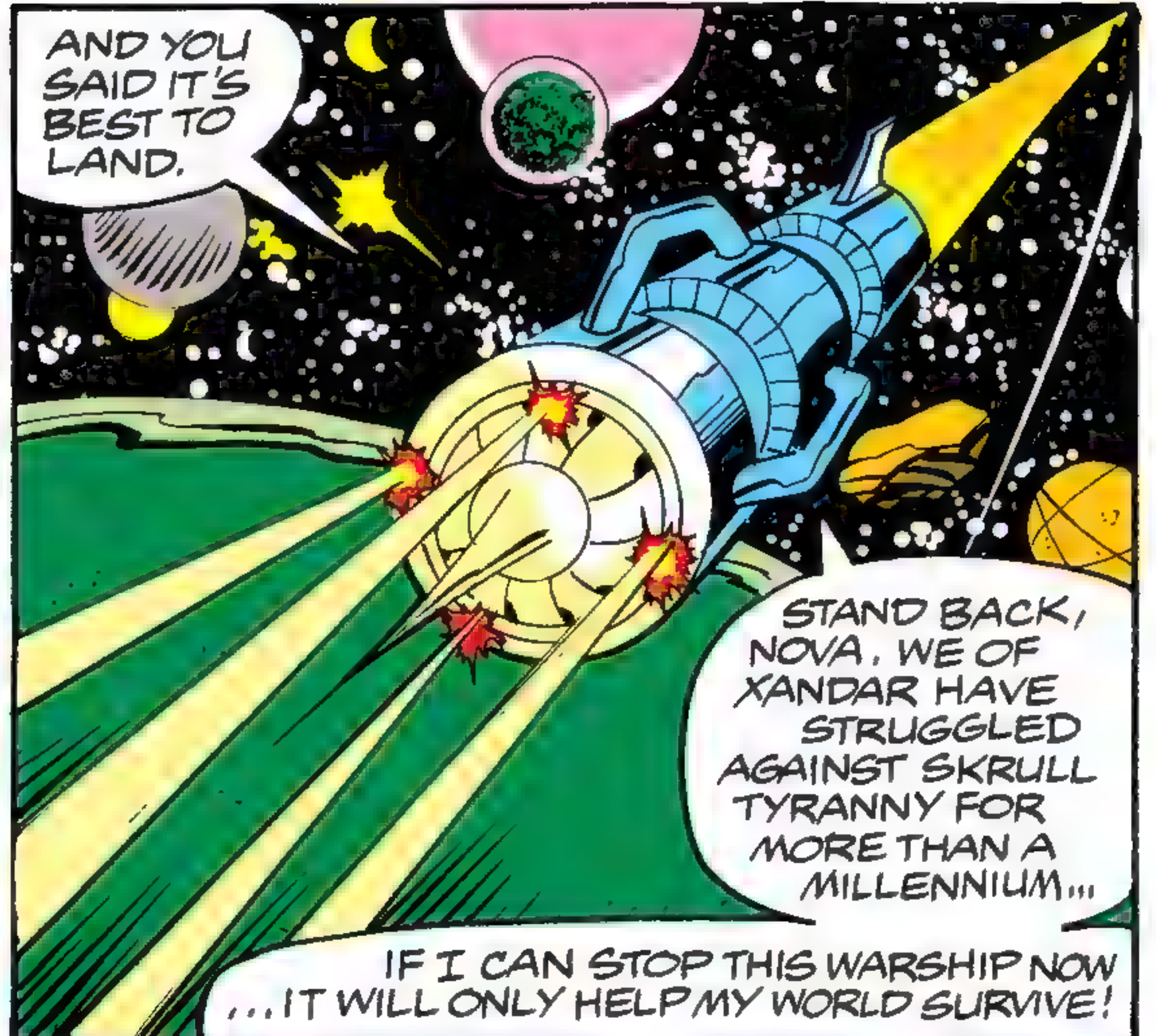
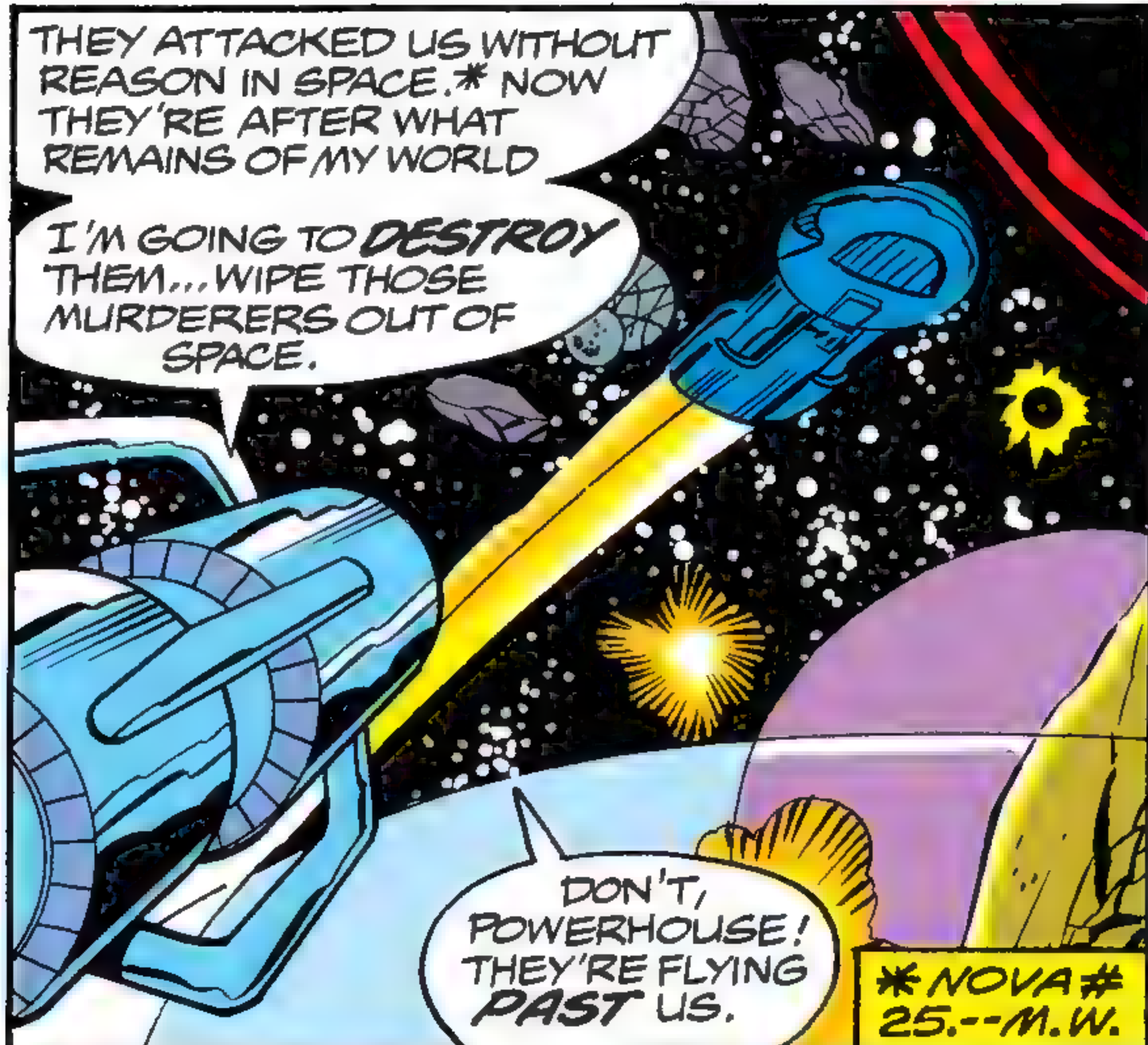




MEANWHILE, ON XANDAR...







NEXT ISSUE: MIGHT OF THE MONOCLE!

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FANTASTIC FOUR

THIS IS IT! THE BATTLE YOU'VE BEEN BEGGING FOR!
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MIGHT OF THE MONOCLE!

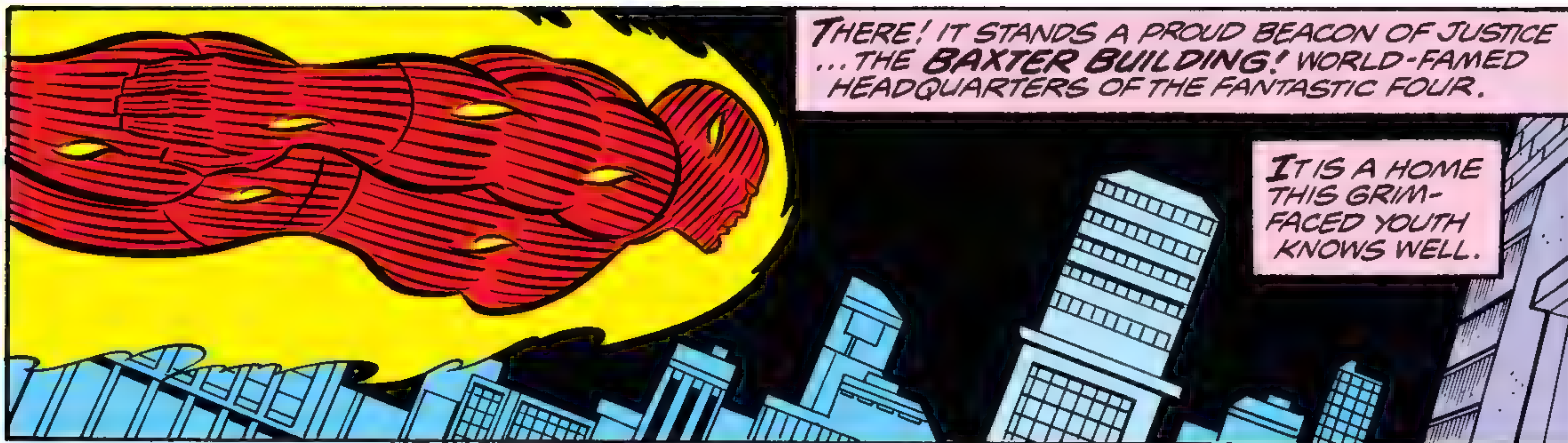
HE STREAKS THROUGH THE COAL-
DARK SKIES LIKE A BLAZING COMET
RUSHING HEADLONG THROUGH SPACE...



HE HAS A MISSION
TO PERFORM...

...AND WOE TO
ANYONE WHO
STANDS IN HIS
WAY!

LG410



THERE! IT STANDS A PROUD BEACON OF JUSTICE
...THE **BAXTER BUILDING!** WORLD-FAMED
HEADQUARTERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

IT IS A HOME
THIS GRIM-
FACED YOUTH
KNOWS WELL.



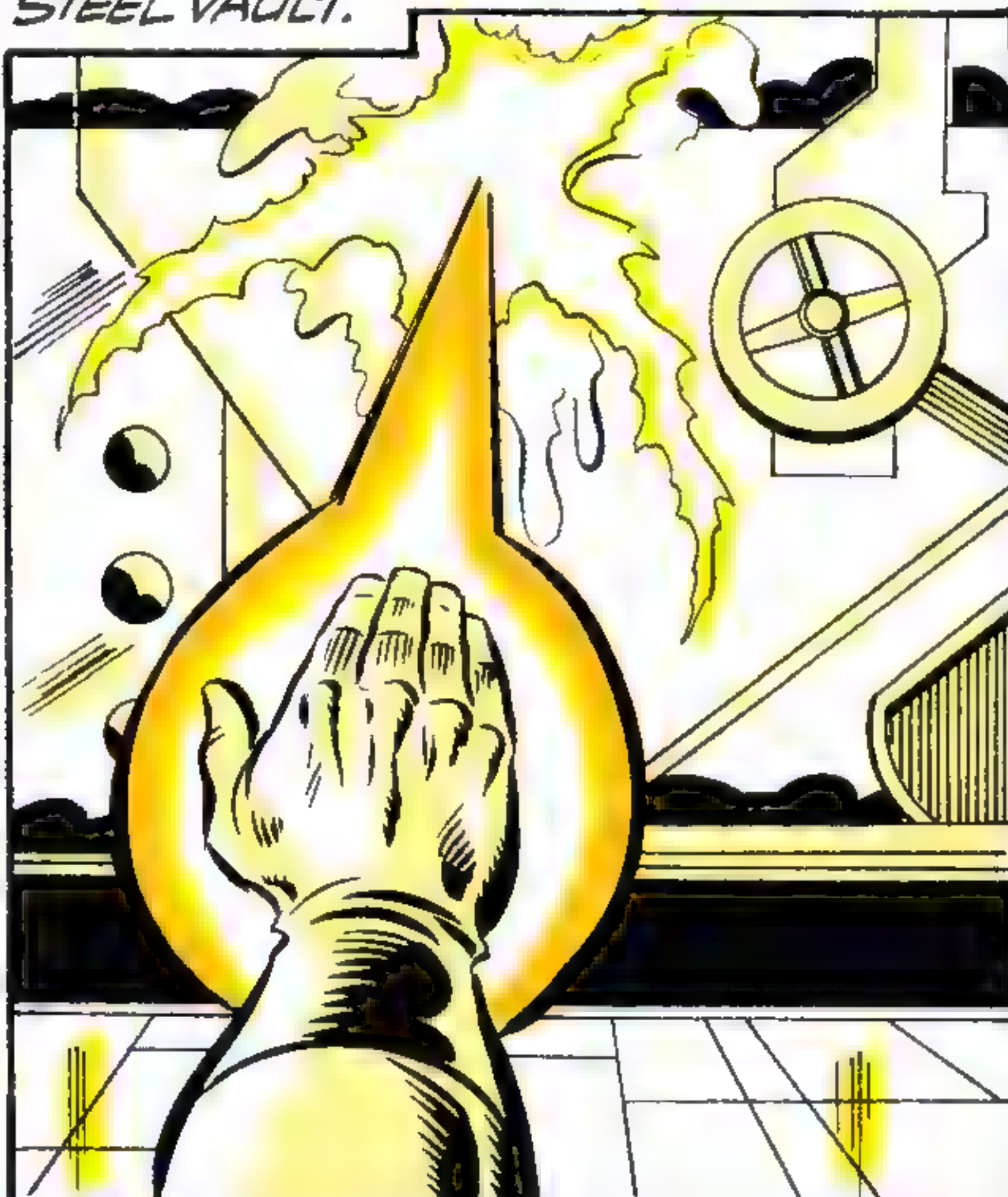
WITHOUT PAUSE,
HE HOLDS HIS HANDS
BEFORE HIM TO BURN
HIS WAY THROUGH
ITS WALL OF CONCRETE
AND STEEL...



INSIDE, HIS FLAME WITHERS
AND DIES AS HE SILENCES
THE INTRUDER ALARMS.

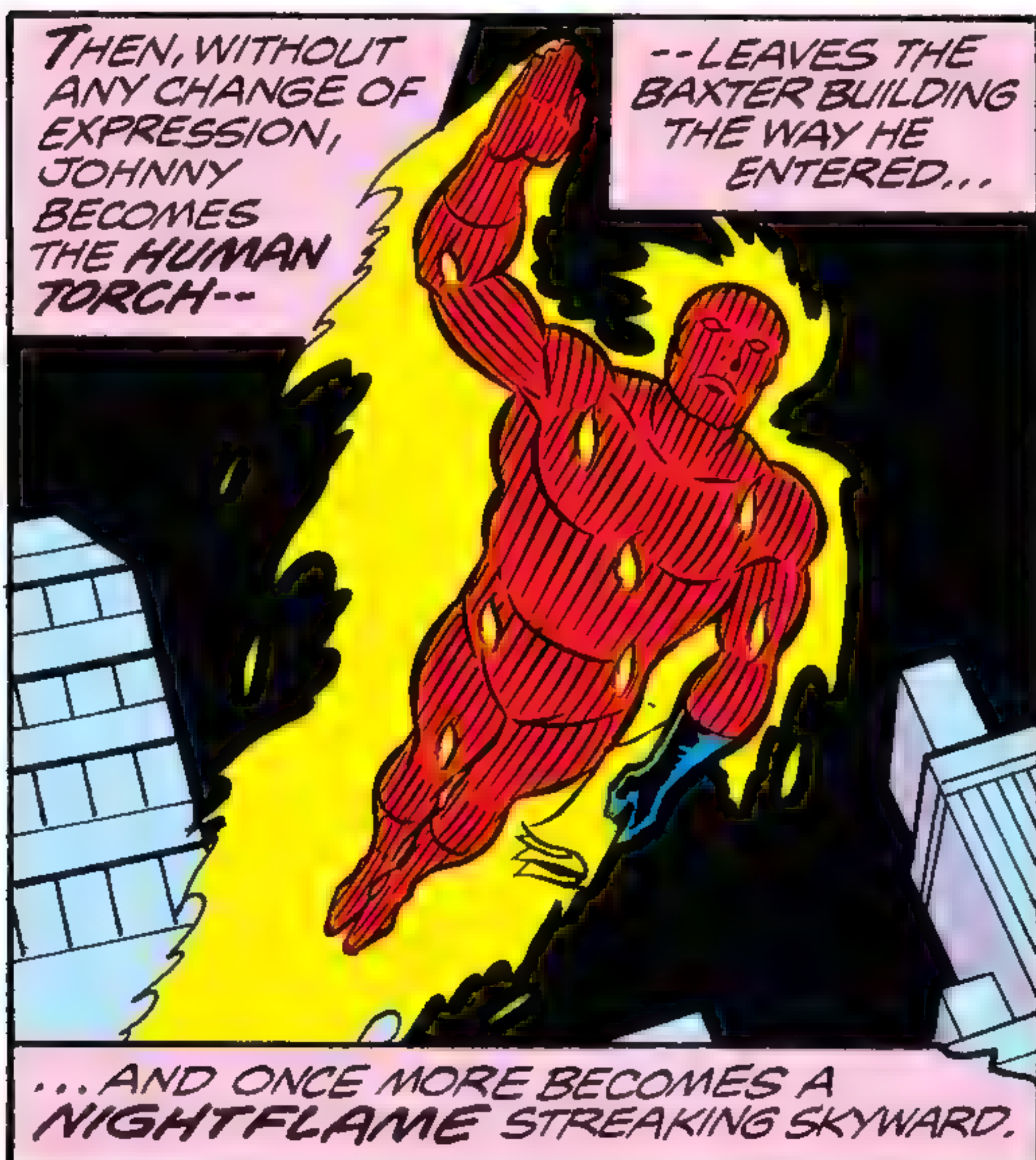
THEN, BLANK-EYED, HE TAKES
A PRIVATE ELEVATOR TO
REED RICHARDS' 36TH
FLOOR LABORATORY--

--AND **MELTS** HIS WAY THROUGH
A TWO-FEET THICK MOLYBDENUM
STEEL VAULT.



STILL SILENT, HE REACHES
MECHANICALLY INTO THE
SAFE AND EXTRACTS JUST
ONE DOCUMENT KEPT IN A
FILE-FOLDER MARKED "W!"

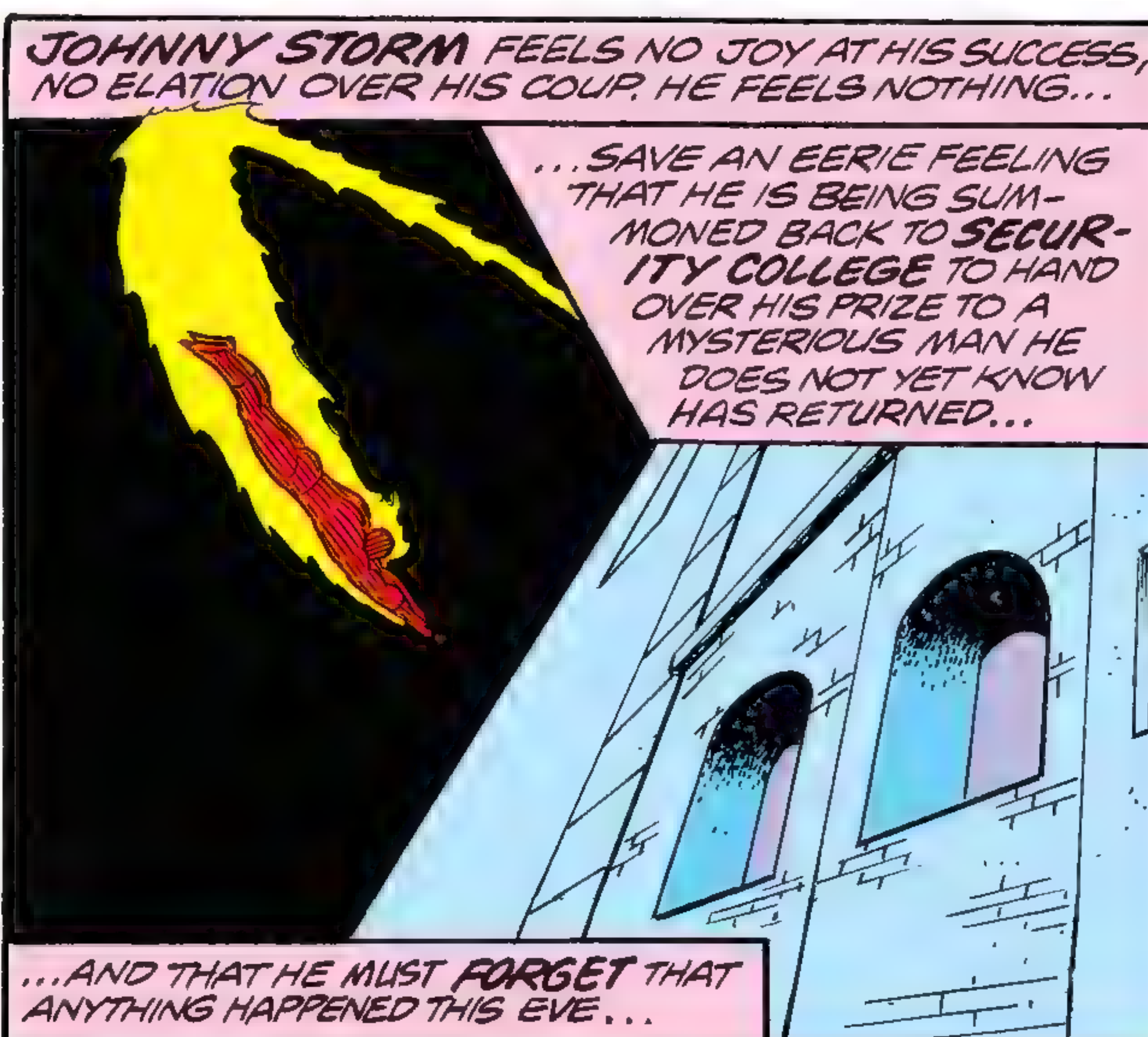
"W" FOR
WEAPONS...
RESTRICTED.



THEN, WITHOUT
ANY CHANGE OF
EXPRESSION,
JOHNNY
BECOMES
THE **HUMAN
TORCH**--

--LEAVES THE
BAXTER BUILDING
THE WAY HE
ENTERED...

...AND ONCE MORE BECOMES A
NIGHTFLAME STREAKING SKYWARD.



JOHNNY STORM FEELS NO JOY AT HIS SUCCESS,
NO ELATION OVER HIS COUP. HE FEELS NOTHING...

...SAVE AN EERIE FEELING
THAT HE IS BEING SUM-
MONED BACK TO **SECUR-
ITY COLLEGE** TO HAND
OVER HIS PRIZE TO A
MYSTERIOUS MAN HE
DOES NOT YET KNOW
HAS RETURNED...

...AND THAT HE MUST **FORGET** THAT
ANYTHING HAPPENED THIS EVE...

BUT AS HE LANDS, JOHNNY MINDLESSLY JOINS OTHERS HIS AGE IN A SILENT, LEMMING-LIKE MARCH TOWARD THE CAMPUS QUAD...

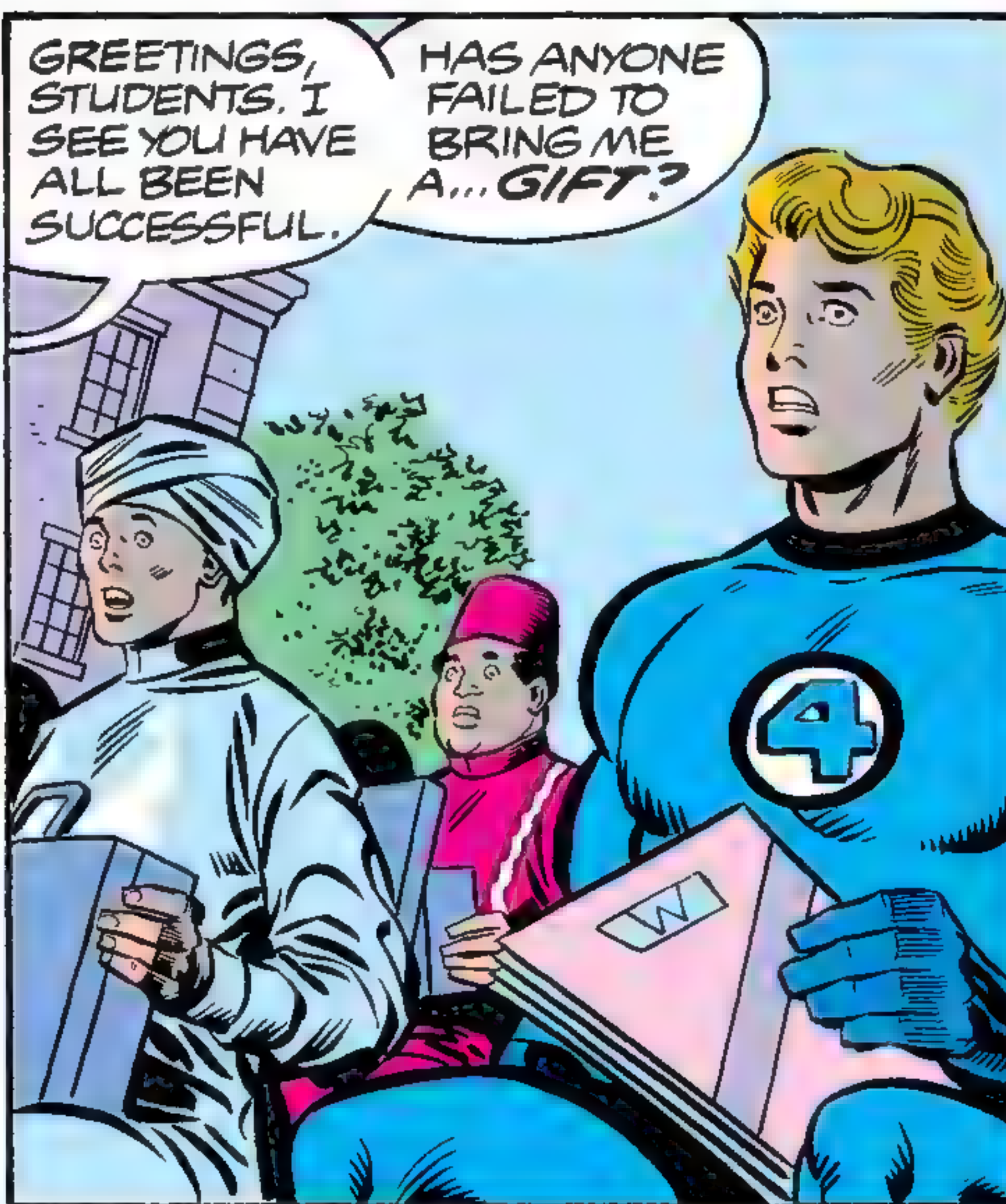


...WHERE HE TAKES HIS SEAT AND AWAITS HIS NEXT INSTRUCTION.



GREETINGS, STUDENTS. I SEE YOU HAVE ALL BEEN SUCCESSFUL.

HAS ANYONE FAILED TO BRING ME A... GIFT?



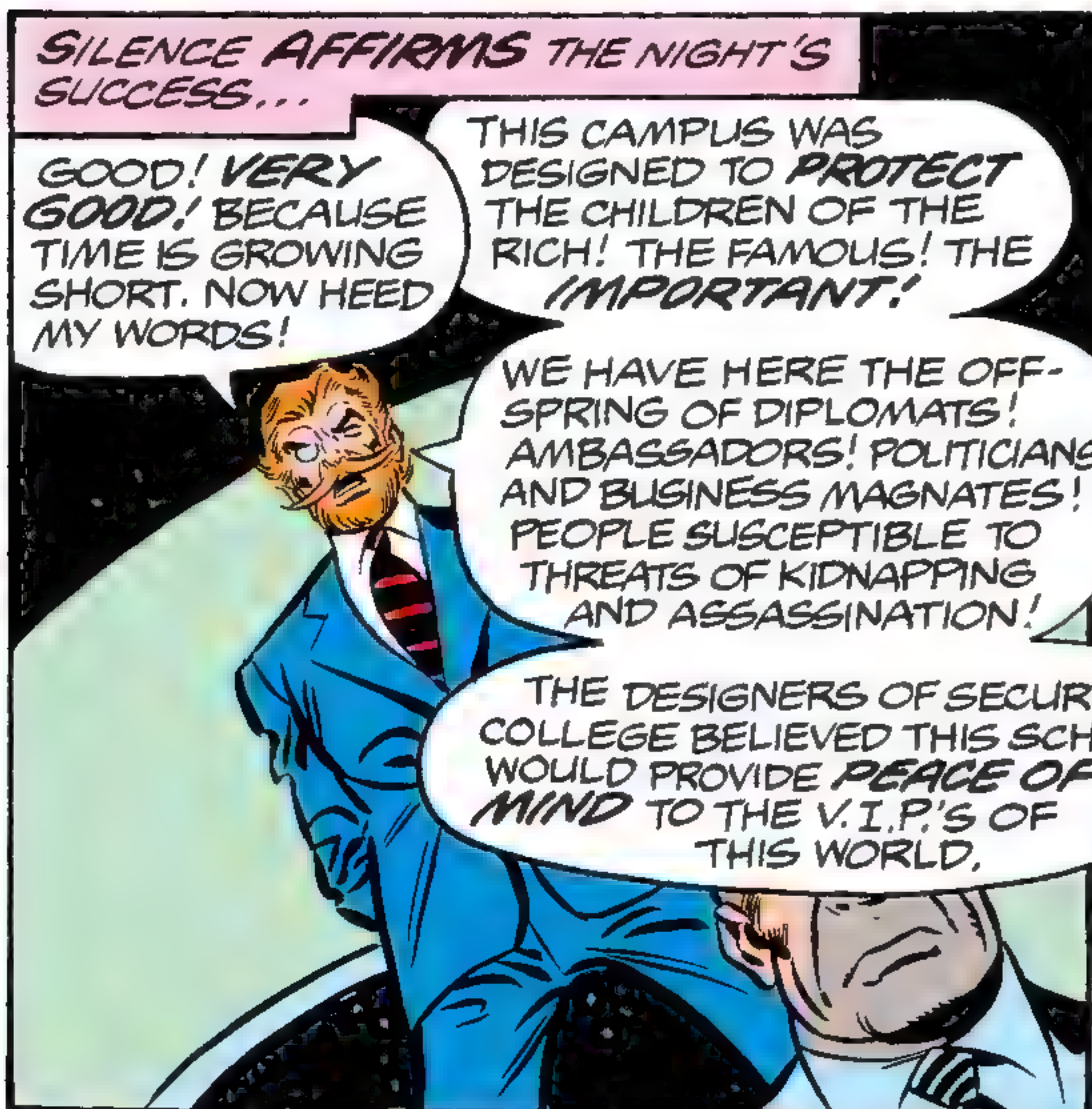
SILENCE AFFIRMS THE NIGHT'S SUCCESS...

GOOD! VERY GOOD! BECAUSE TIME IS GROWING SHORT. NOW HEED MY WORDS!

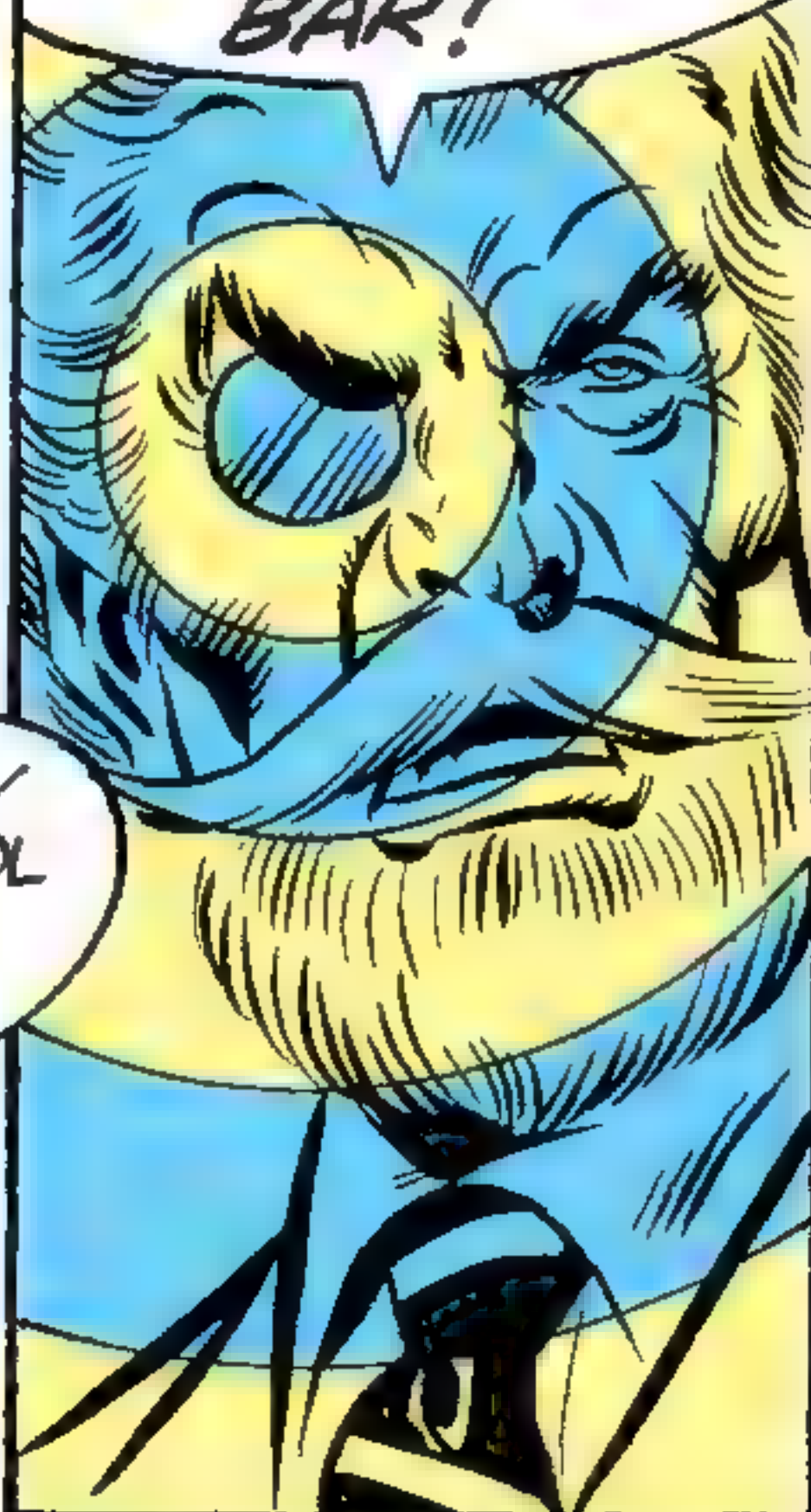
THIS CAMPUS WAS DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE CHILDREN OF THE RICH! THE FAMOUS! THE IMPORTANT!

WE HAVE HERE THE OFFSPRING OF DIPLOMATS! AMBASSADORS! POLITICIANS! AND BUSINESS MAGNATES! PEOPLE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THREATS OF KIDNAPPING AND ASSASSINATION!

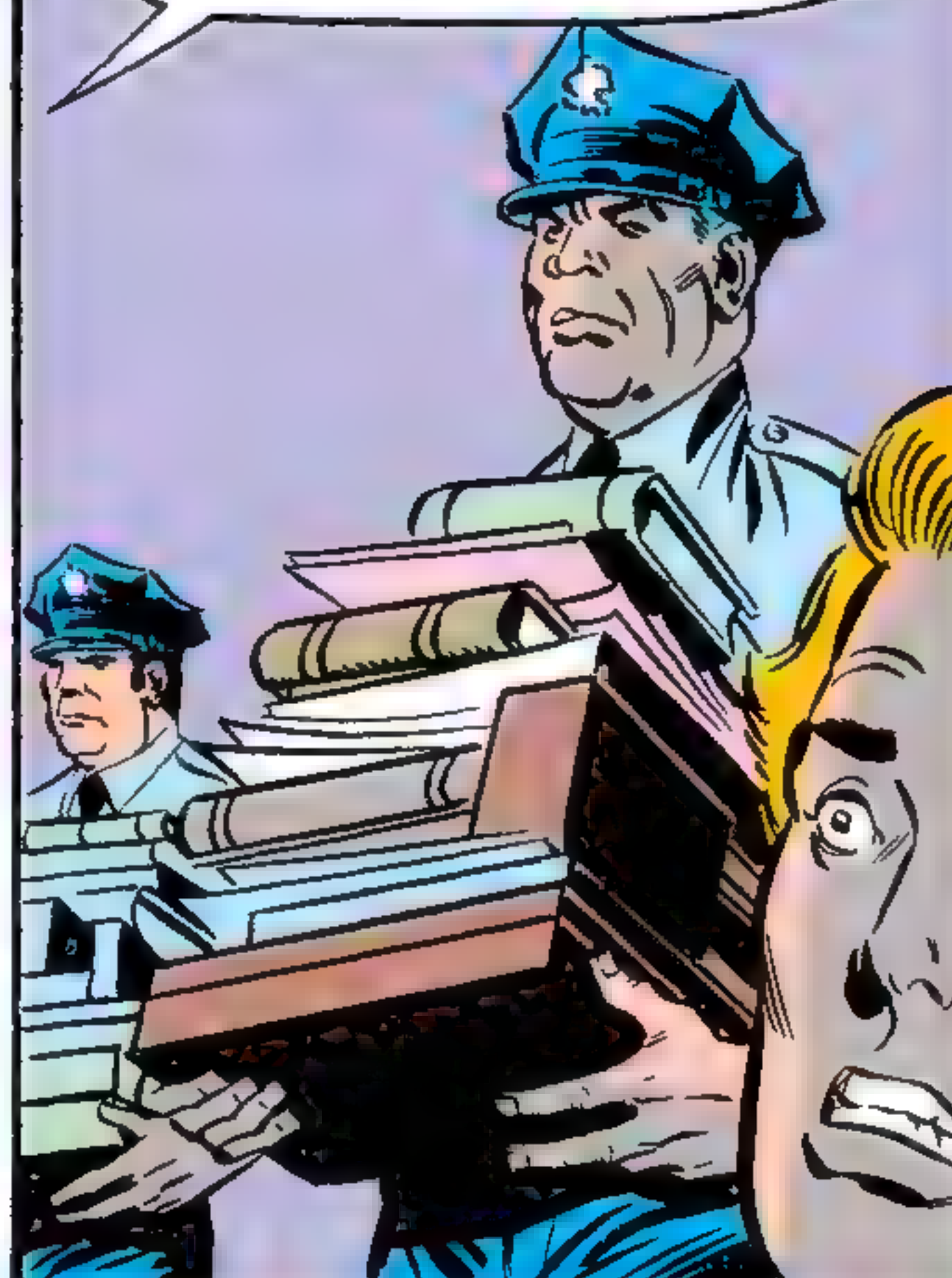
THE DESIGNERS OF SECURITY COLLEGE BELIEVED THIS SCHOOL WOULD PROVIDE PEACE OF MIND TO THE V.I.P.'S OF THIS WORLD.



I AM CERTAIN THEY COULD NOT ENVISION ITS BEING TAKEN OVER BY THE VERY PEOPLE THEY SOUGHT TO BAR!



SO NOW, PASS YOUR GIFTS FORWARD. HAND THEM TO MY GUARDS. BUT DO SO QUICKLY.



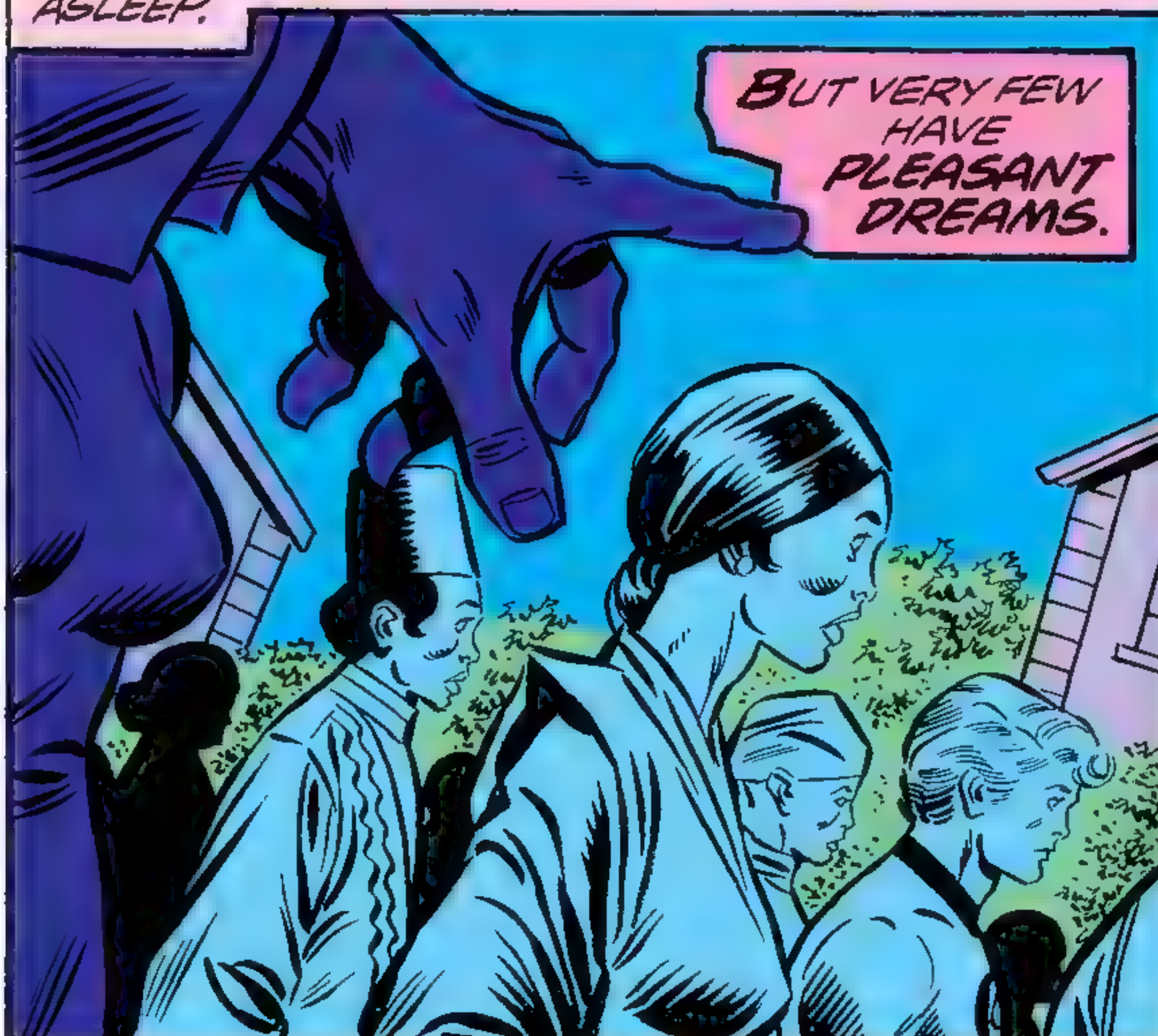
NOW! RETURN TO YOUR ROOMS! FORGET ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED TONIGHT. TOMORROW WILL BE AN ORDINARY DAY FILLED WITH STUDIES AND CLASSWORK...

BUT TOMORROW NIGHT-- AHHH... WE MAKE OUR MOVE AT LAST!

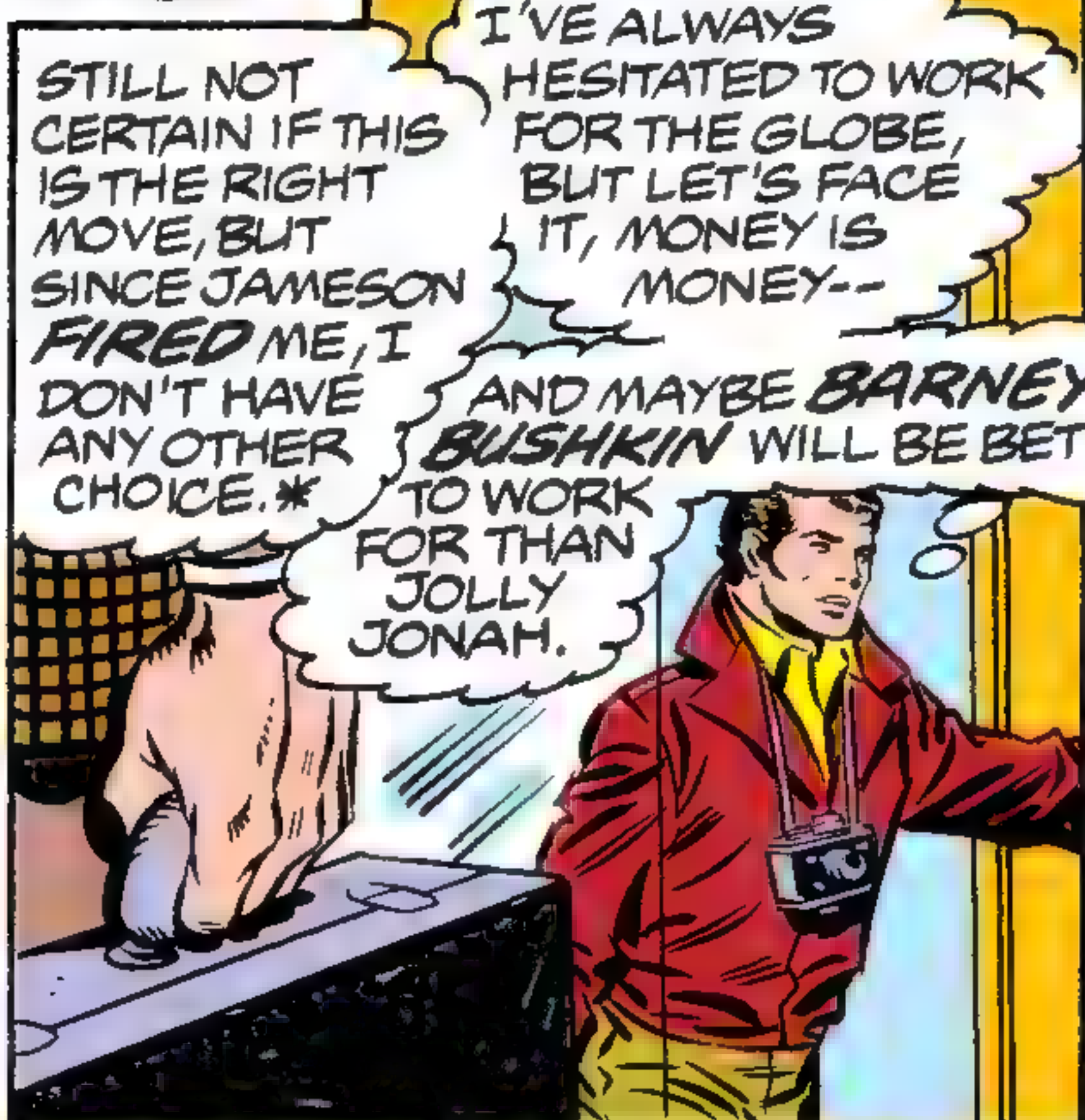


SILENT, SHEEPLIKE, THEY DO AS THE MONOCLE COMMANDS. AND, WITHIN MOMENTS, ALL ARE ASLEEP.

BUT VERY FEW HAVE PLEASANT DREAMS.

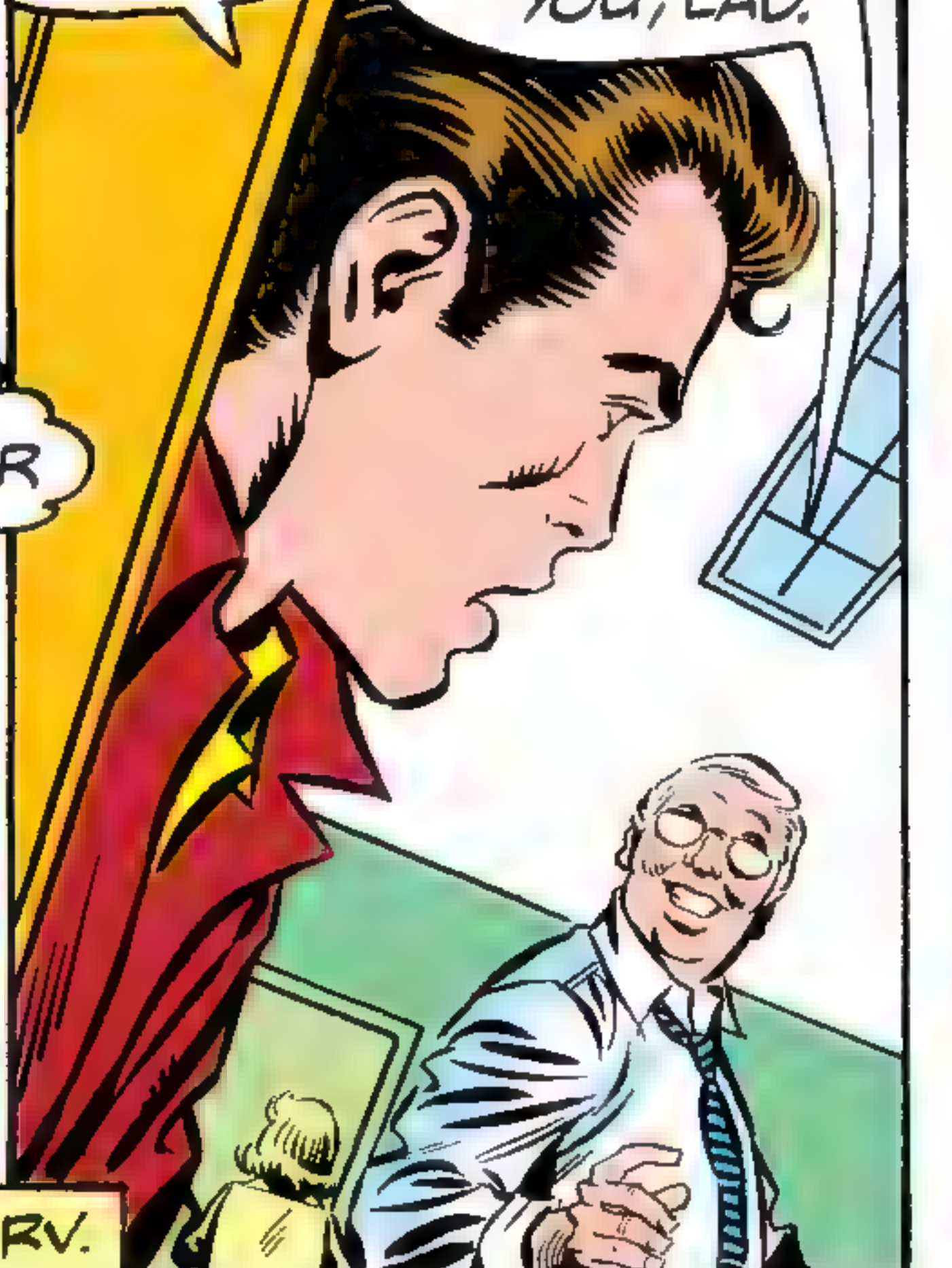


BUT THE NIGHT MUST EVENTUALLY END, AND SO WE BEGIN ANEW IN THE MORNING AS A FAMILIAR FIGURE ENTERS THE OFFICE OF... **THE DAILY GLOBE**...

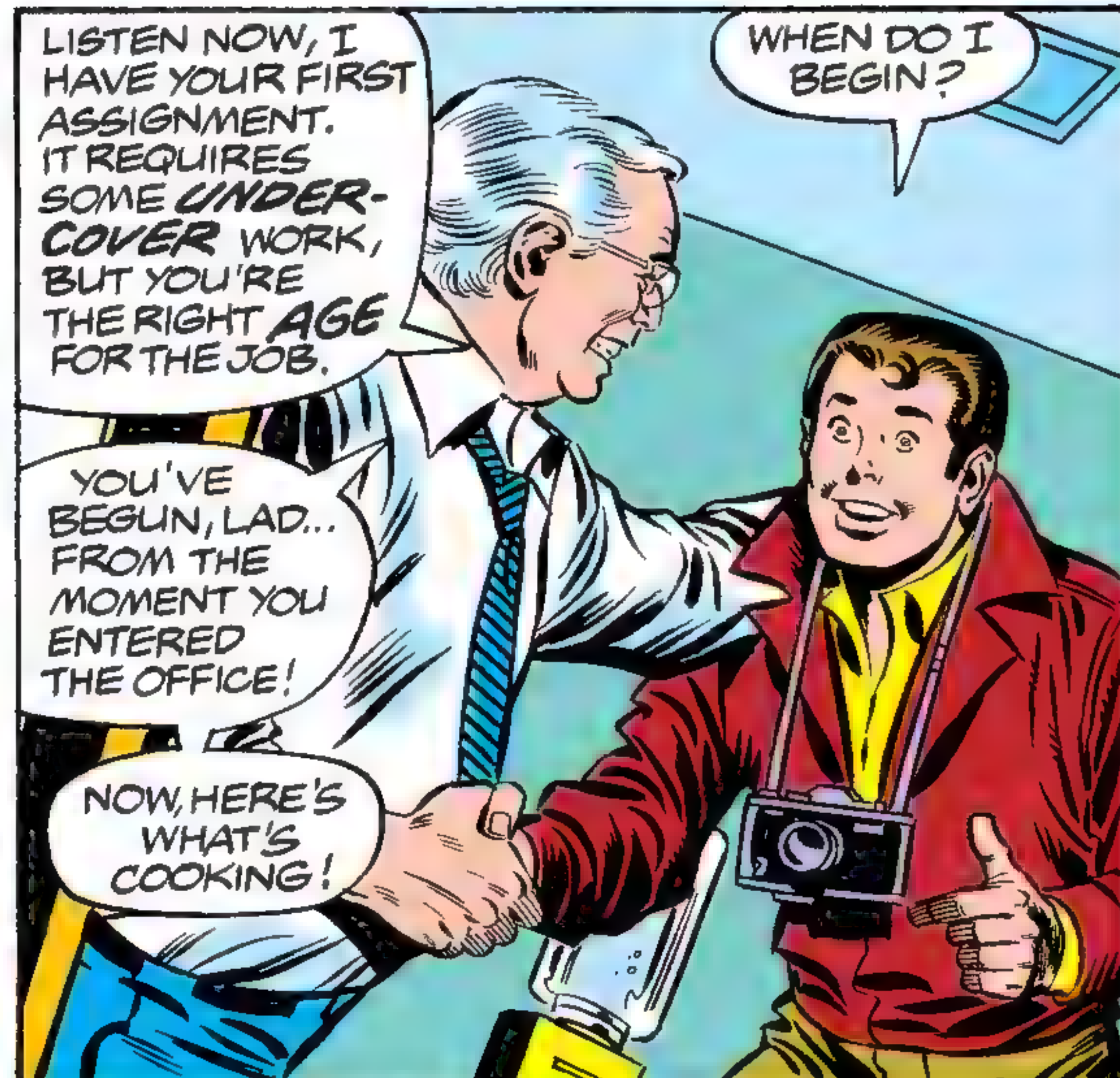


* AS SEEN IN SPIDER-MAN #93.--MARV.

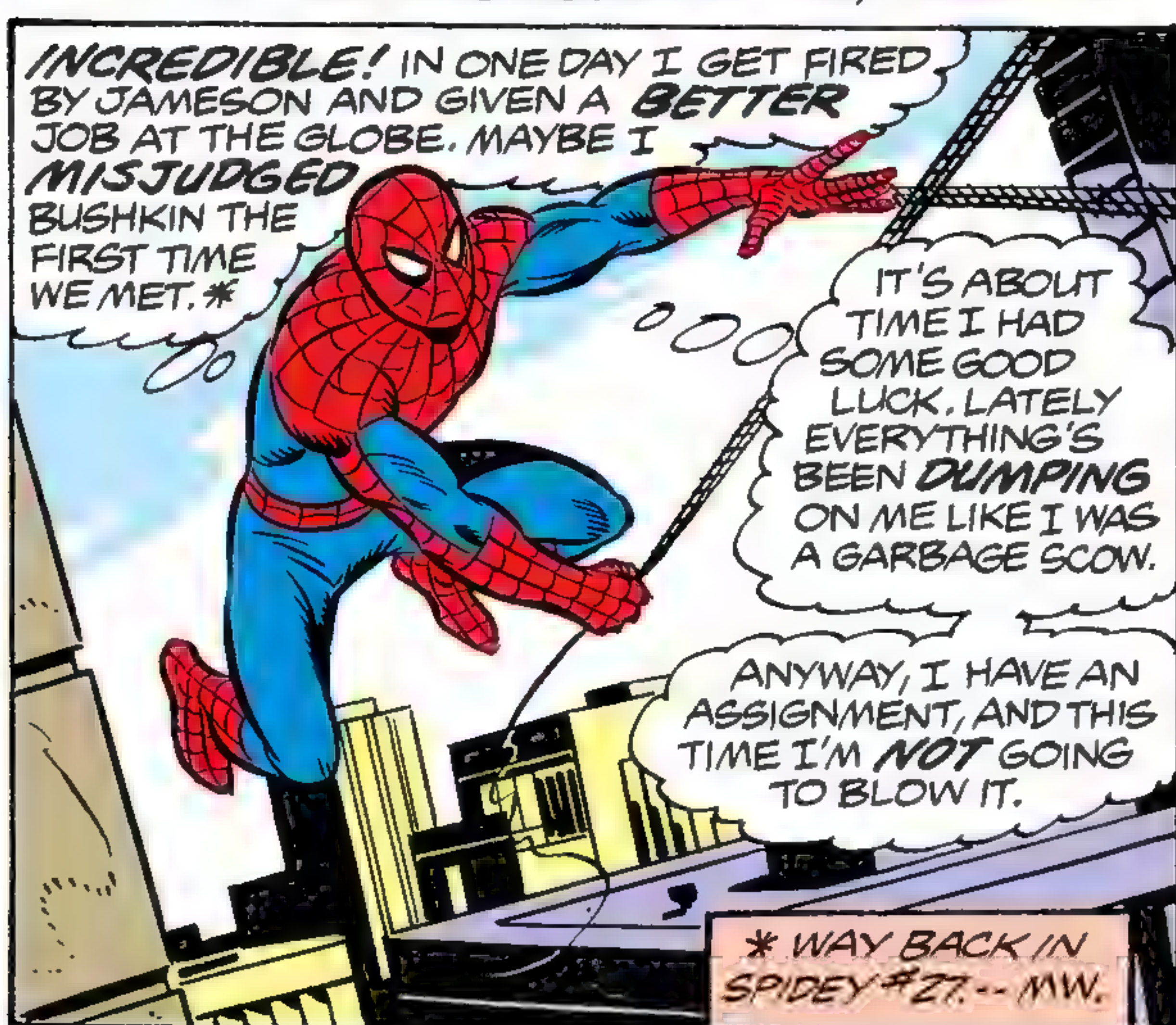
MR. BUSHKIN? YOU CALLED ME... MY NAME'S--



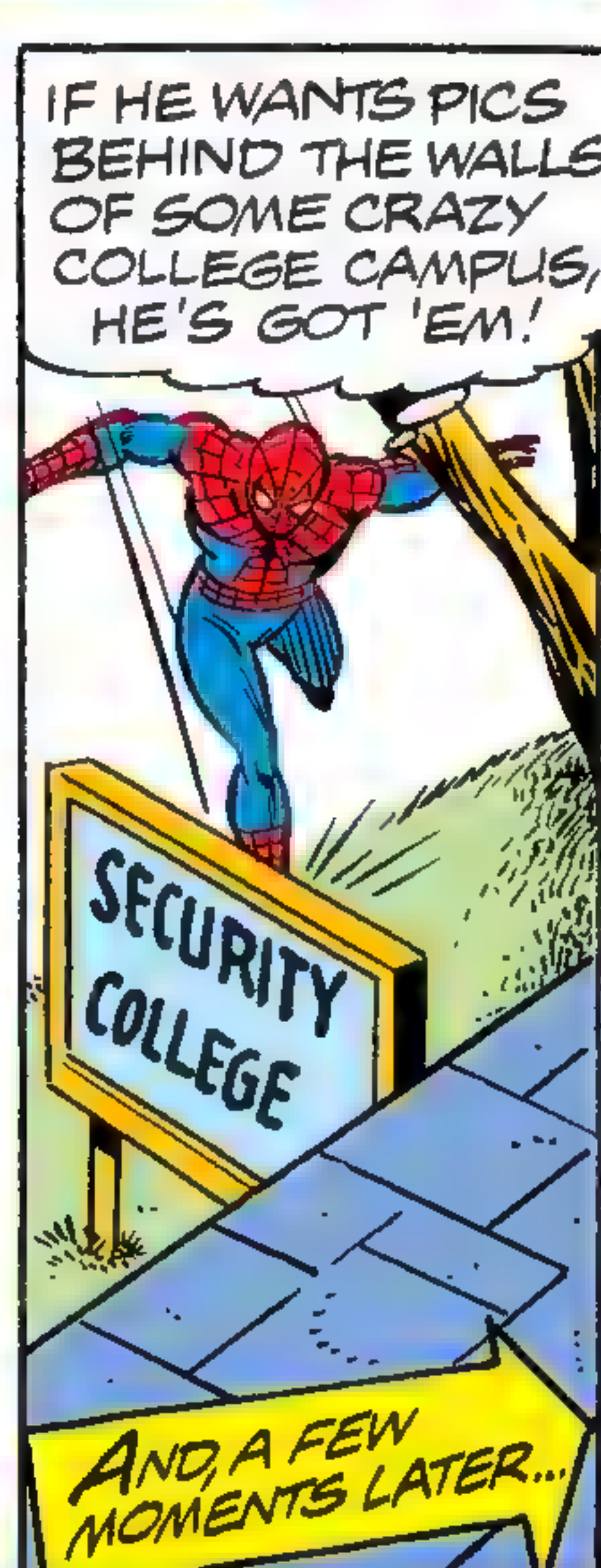
COME IN, COME IN. IT'S BEEN YEARS, HASN'T IT? I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW **HAPPY** I AM YOU'RE WORKING FOR US. YOU **WANT** ANYTHING? NAME IT, SON. IT'S **YOURS!**



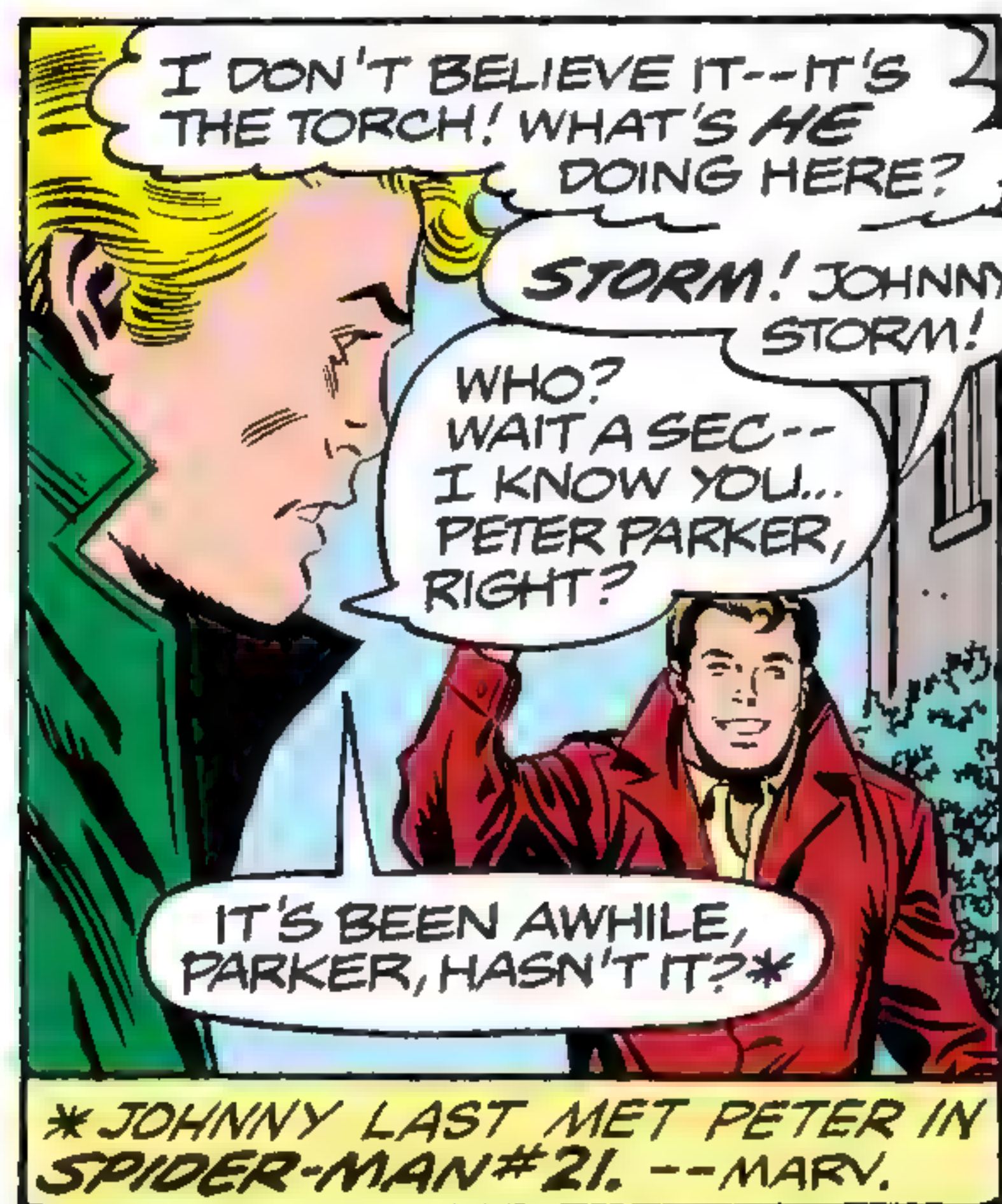
FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, A DUMBSTRUCK PETER PARKER LEAVES THE GLOBE'S OFFICES, AND...



* WAY BACK IN SPIDEY #27.--MW.



QUIETLY, PETER PARKER MAKES HIS WAY ABOUT THE SPRAWLING CAMPUS GROUNDS, INCONSPICUOUSLY SNAPPING PHOTOGRAPHS, INNOCENTLY ASKING QUESTIONS. THEN...



I DON'T BELIEVE IT--IT'S THE TORCH! WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?

STORM! JOHNNY STORM!

WHO? WAIT A SEC-- I KNOW YOU... PETER PARKER, RIGHT?

IT'S BEEN AWHILE, PARKER, HASN'T IT?*

*JOHNNY LAST MET PETER IN SPIDER-MAN #21. --MARY.

COME TO THINK OF IT, PARKER... WHAT **ARE** YOU DOING HERE? I DIDN'T THINK YOU HAD THE **BREAD** FOR THIS KINDA PLACE...



BESIDES, WITH YOUR GENIUS, I'D'VE THOUGHT YOU'D'VE **GRADUATED** BY NOW...

LISTEN, I CAN **TRUST** YOU, STORM... I'M HERE ON ASSIGNMENT FOR THE GLOBE.

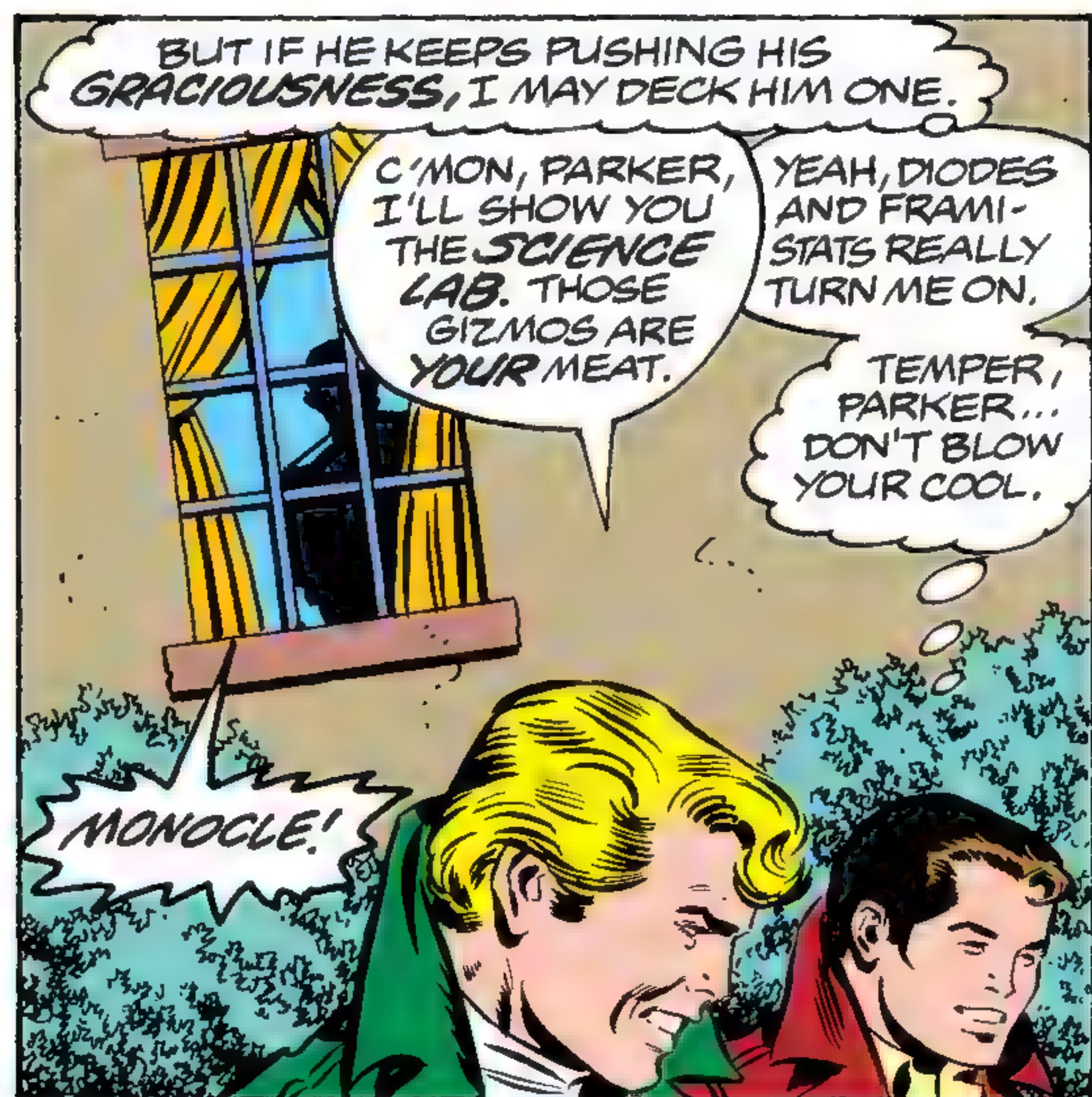
PLEASE DON'T BLOW MY COVER... I REALLY NEED THE MONEY RIGHT NOW.

ALL RIGHT, KID, NO SWEAT... I'LL GIVE YOU A **BREAK** EVEN THOUGH THIS PLACE IS SET UP TO KEEP AWAY **SNOOPS** LIKE YOU.



GOSH, THANKS, TORCH... YOU'RE A REAL SWELL GUY.

YEECH! TALKING LIKE THAT MAKES ME **SICK**... BUT ANYTHING TO KEEP THE OLD SECRET IDENTITY A SECRET.



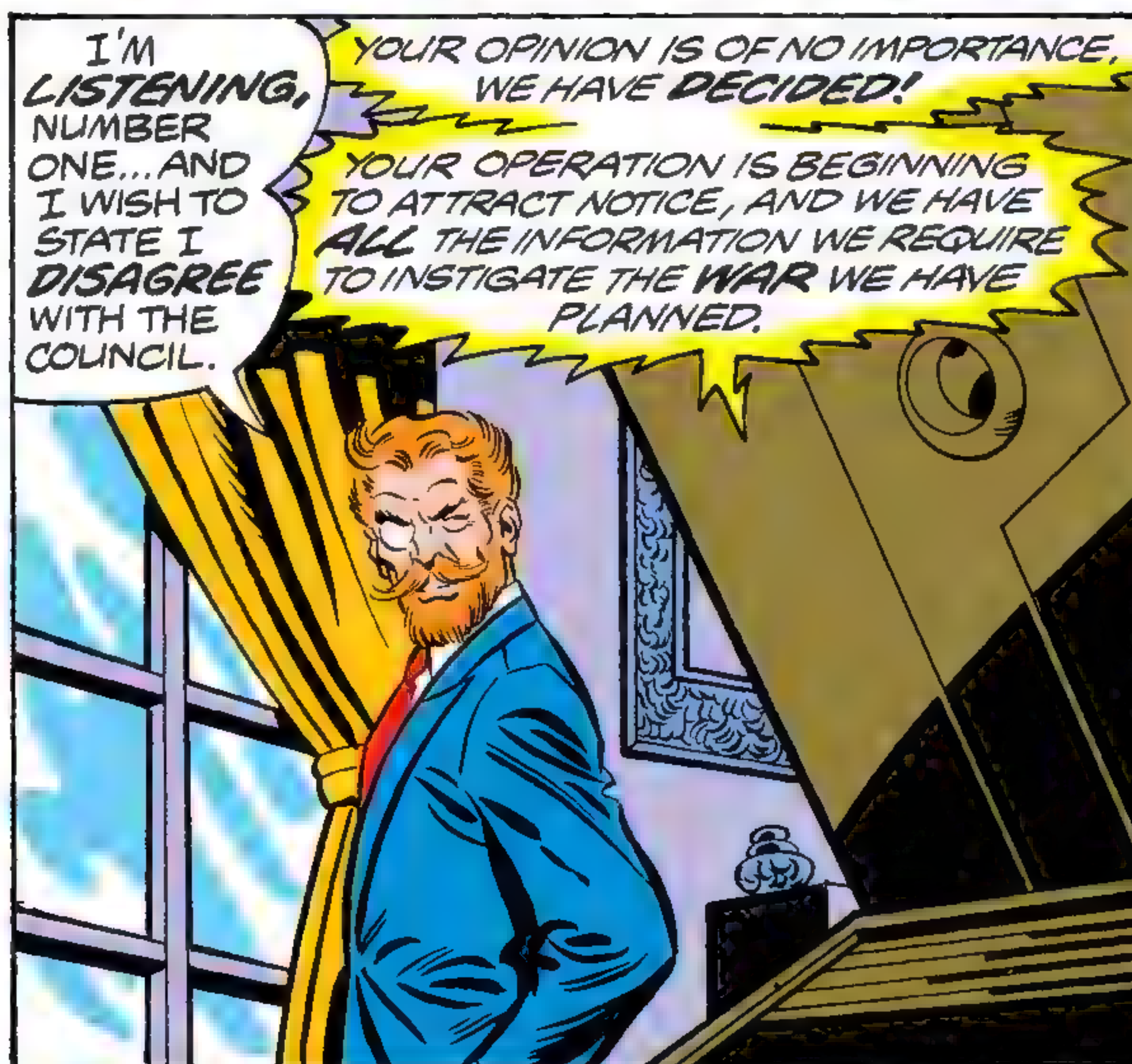
BUT IF HE KEEPS PUSHING HIS **GRACIOUSNESS**, I MAY DECK HIM ONE.

C'MON, PARKER, I'LL SHOW YOU THE **SCIENCE LAB**. THOSE GIZMOS ARE YOUR MEAT.

YEAH, DIODES AND FRAMI-STATS REALLY TURN ME ON.

TEMPER, PARKER... DON'T BLOW YOUR COOL.

MONOCLE!



I'M **LISTENING**, NUMBER ONE... AND I WISH TO STATE I **DISAGREE** WITH THE COUNCIL.

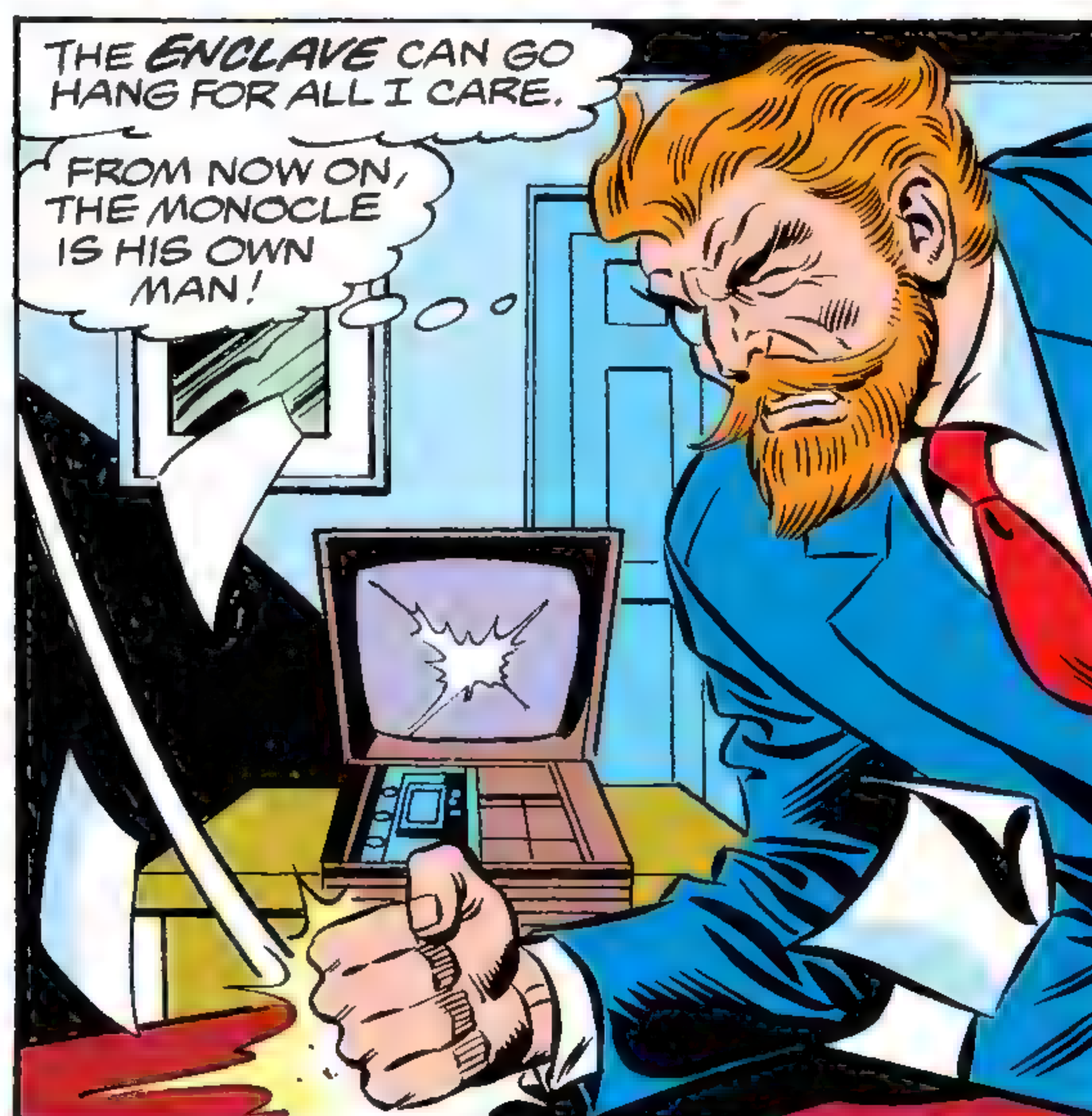
YOUR OPINION IS OF NO IMPORTANCE. WE HAVE **DECIDED!**

YOUR OPERATION IS BEGINNING TO ATTRACT NOTICE, AND WE HAVE **ALL** THE INFORMATION WE REQUIRE TO INSTIGATE THE **WAR** WE HAVE PLANNED.



DISMANTLE ALL OPERATIONS IMMEDIATELY AND RETURN TO BASE TWO.

BAH! YOU WISH TO **HUMILIATE** ME... BUT YOU'LL **NOT SUCCEED.**

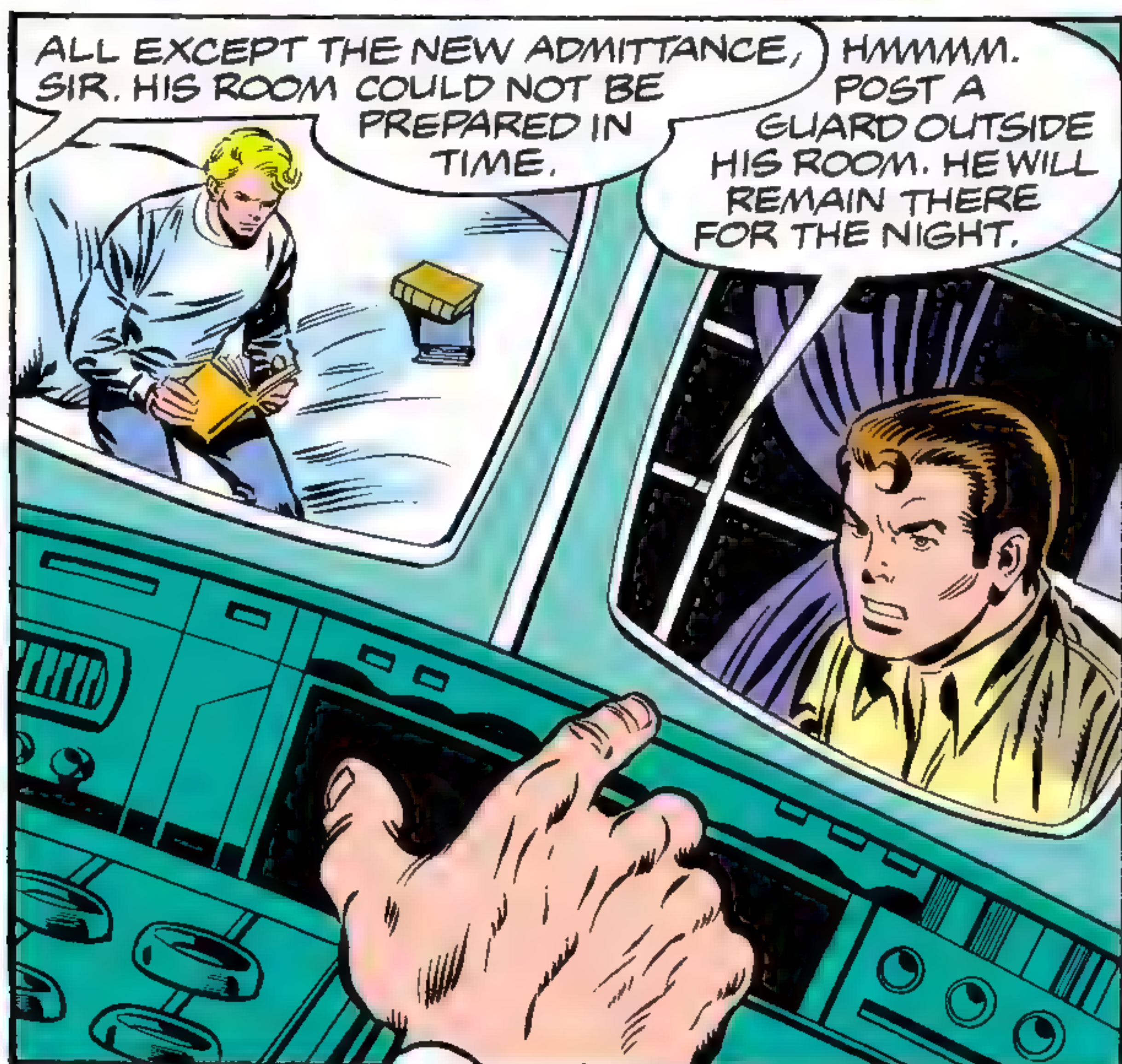
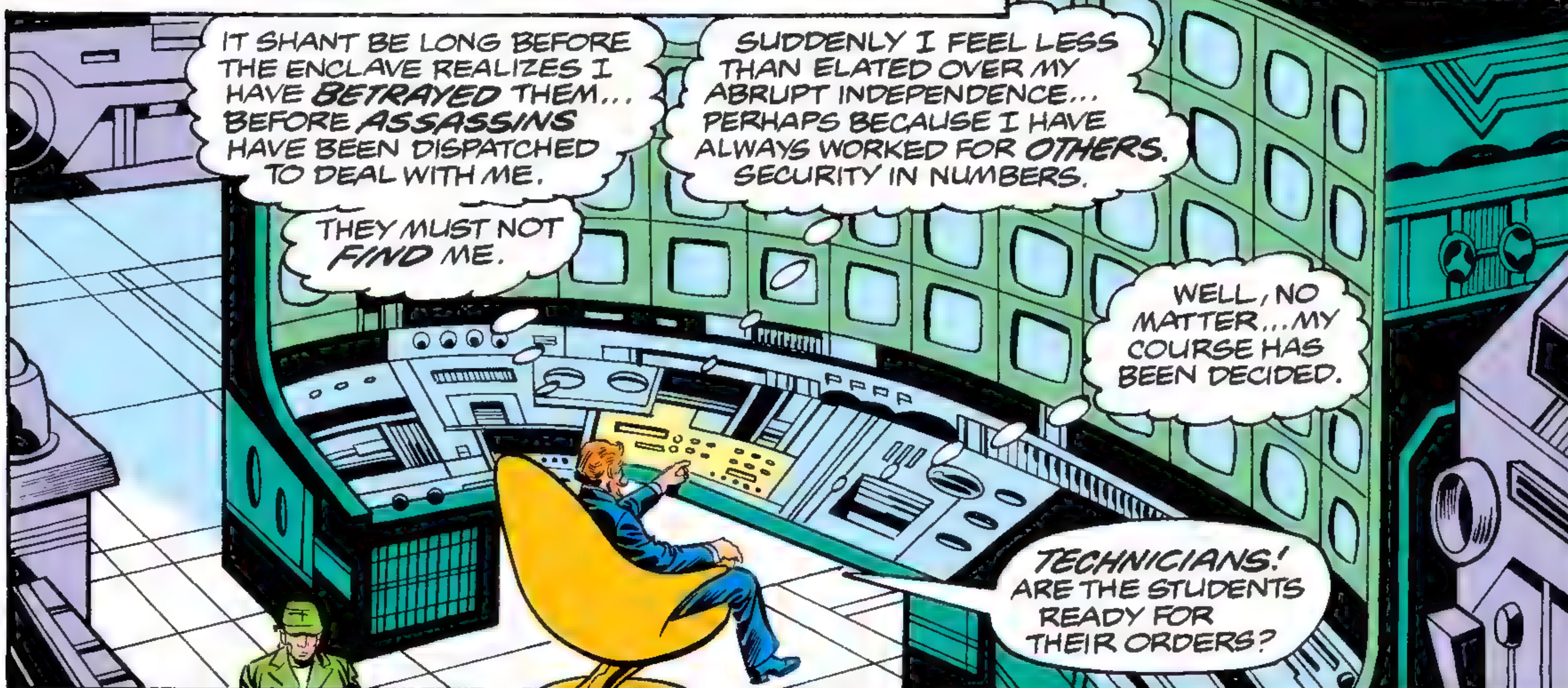


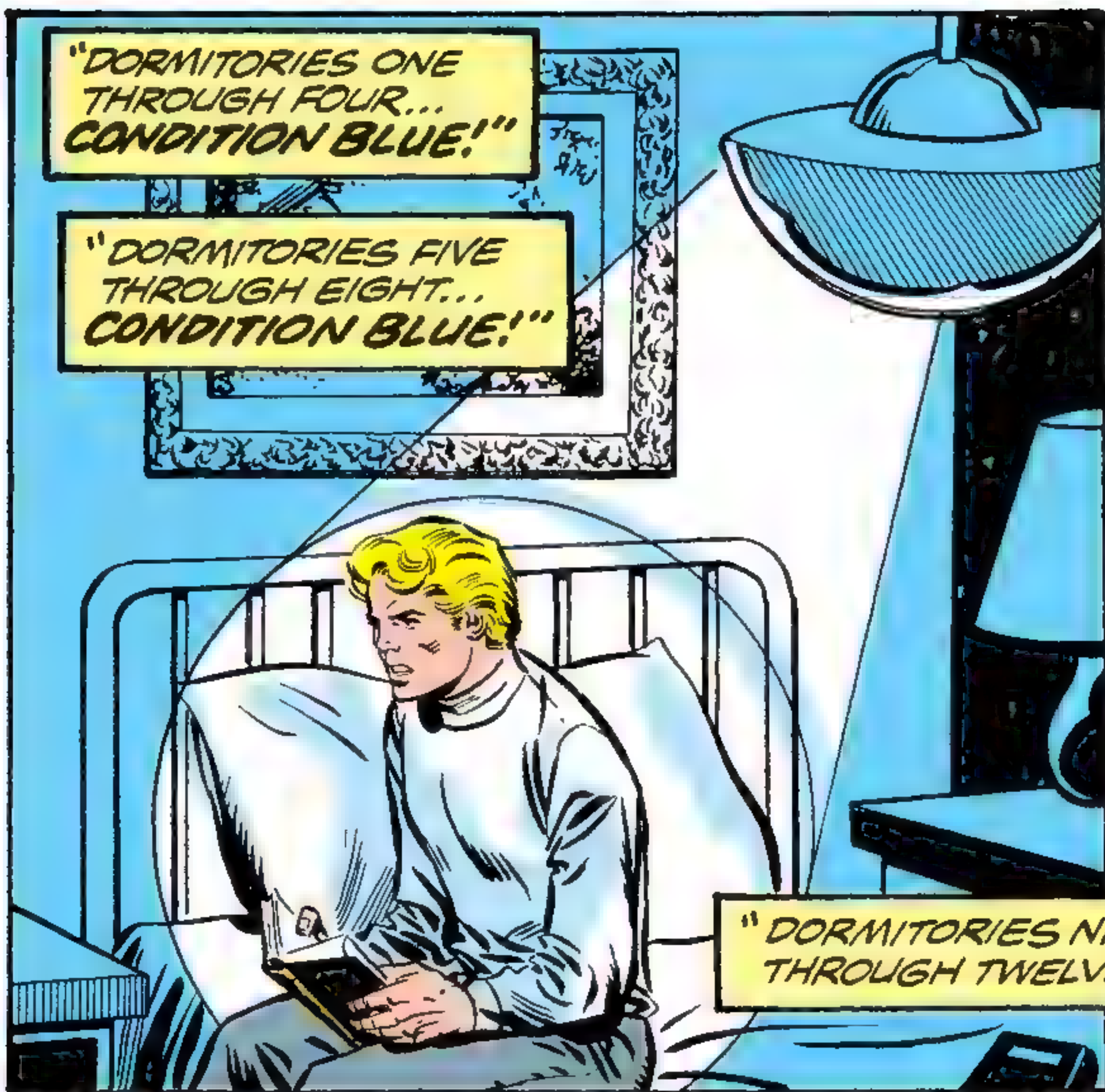
THE **ENCLAVE** CAN GO HANG FOR ALL I CARE.

FROM NOW ON, THE **MONOCLE** IS HIS OWN MAN!



AS A PERPLEXED PETER PARKER MOURNS THE LOSS OF A SEVERAL HUNDRED DOLLAR CAMERA, LET'S REJOIN THE MONOCLE AS HE MAKES A DESPERATE DECISION...

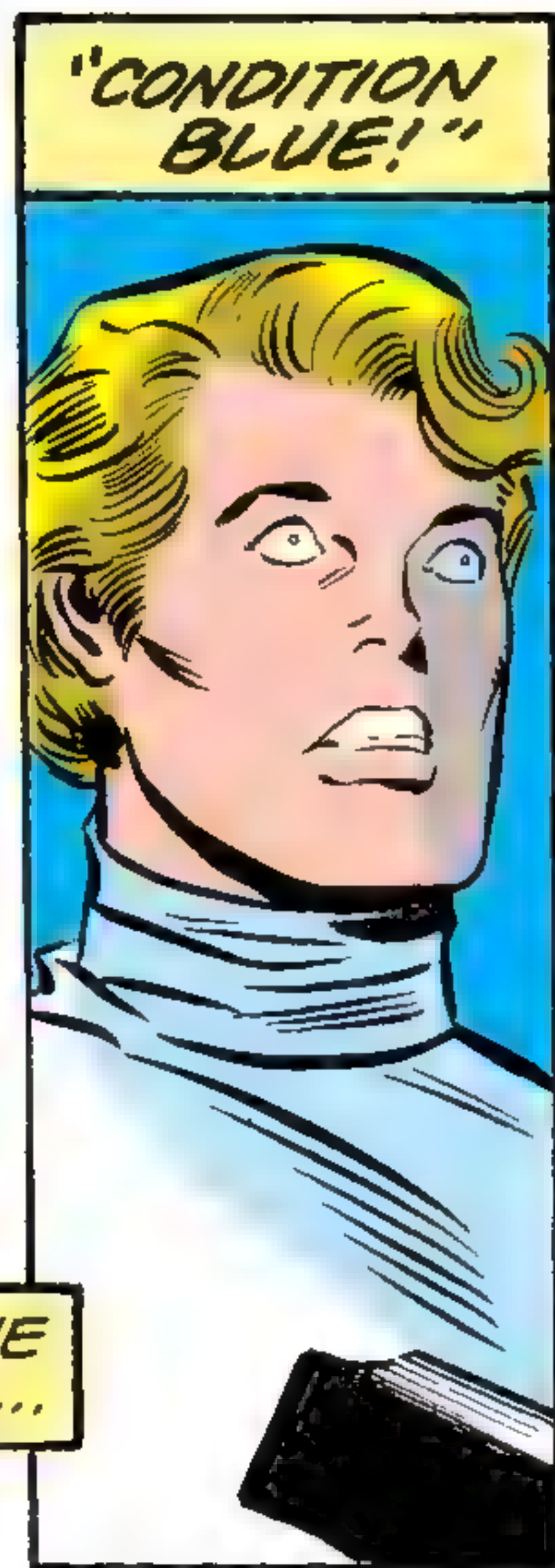




"DORMITORIES ONE THROUGH FOUR...
CONDITION BLUE!"

"DORMITORIES FIVE THROUGH EIGHT...
CONDITION BLUE!"

"DORMITORIES NINE THROUGH TWELVE..."



"**CONDITION BLUE!**"



"ALL STUDENTS UNDER CONTROL. YOU MAY PROCEED WITH THEIR ORDERS, SIR."



MEANWHILE...

HUNH, SOUNDS LIKE THERE'S **MARCHING** GOING ON OUTSIDE. BUT THAT'S--

MY DOOR'S **LOCKED**...!
...AND I CAN SENSE A **GUARD** STANDING OUTSIDE IT.



OBVIOUSLY THEY WANT TO KEEP ME IN HERE. BUT WHY?

WELL, WHATEVER THE REASON, THEY'VE AROUSED THE OL' SPIDEY-CURIOSITY...



LET 'EM KEEP THEIR **GUARDS** OUTSIDE THE DOOR...

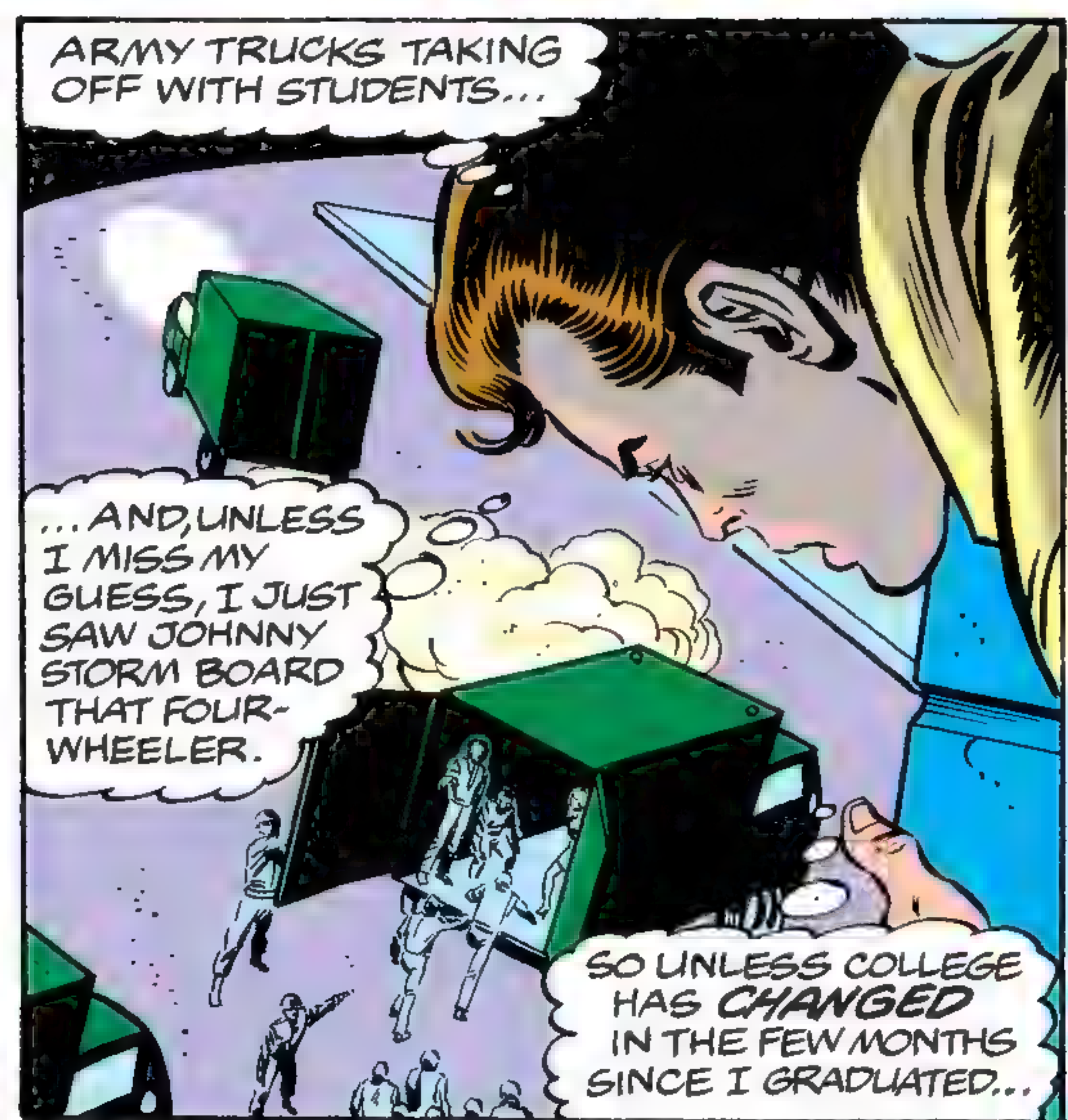
SMASH!



... 'CAUSE WHEN YOU GOT FEET THAT CAN **STICK** TO STONE WALLS... YOU DON'T NEED THE **STAIRS** TO GET DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL.

WELL, WELL, WELL... I WAS **RIGHT**... SOMETHING'S **ROTTEN** HERE IN SECURITY COLLEGE...

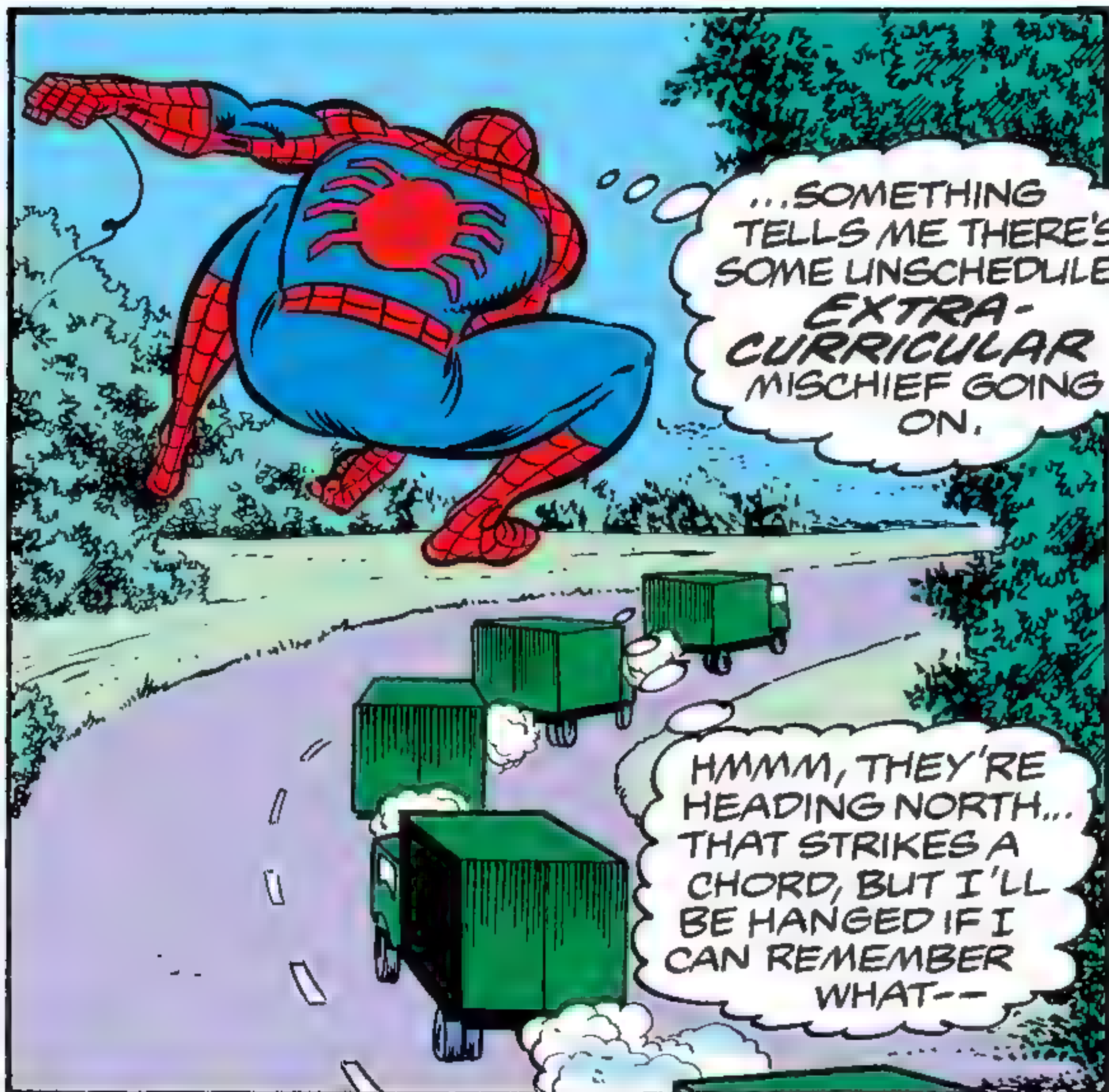
...AND IT'S NOT JUST THE REGULAR SCHOOL CAFETERIA FARE.



ARMY TRUCKS TAKING OFF WITH STUDENTS...

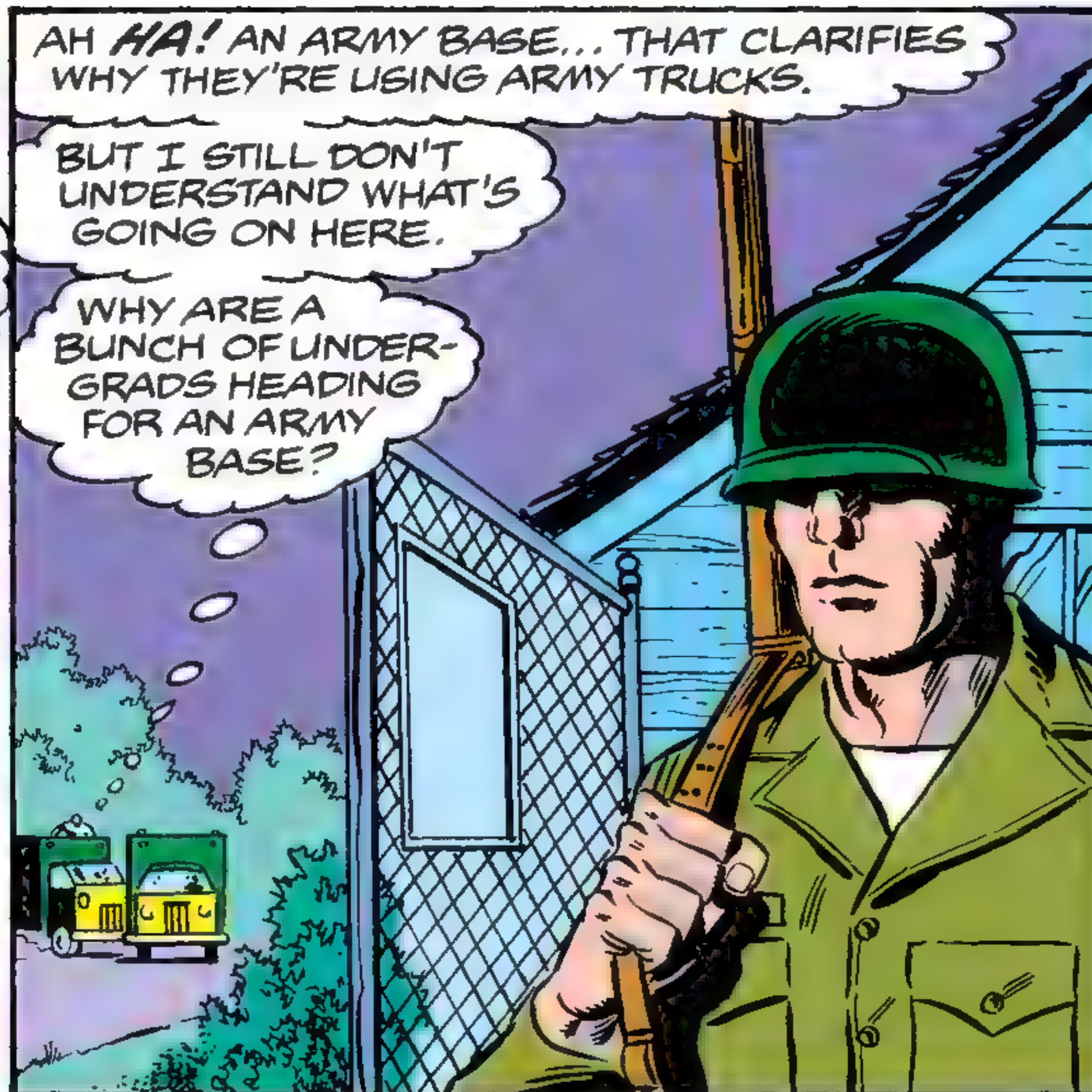
...AND, UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, I JUST SAW **JOHNNY STORM** BOARD THAT FOUR-WHEELER.

SO UNLESS COLLEGE HAS **CHANGED** IN THE FEW MONTHS SINCE I GRADUATED...



...SOMETHING TELLS ME THERE'S SOME UNSCHEDULED **EXTRA-CURRICULAR** MISCHIEF GOING ON.

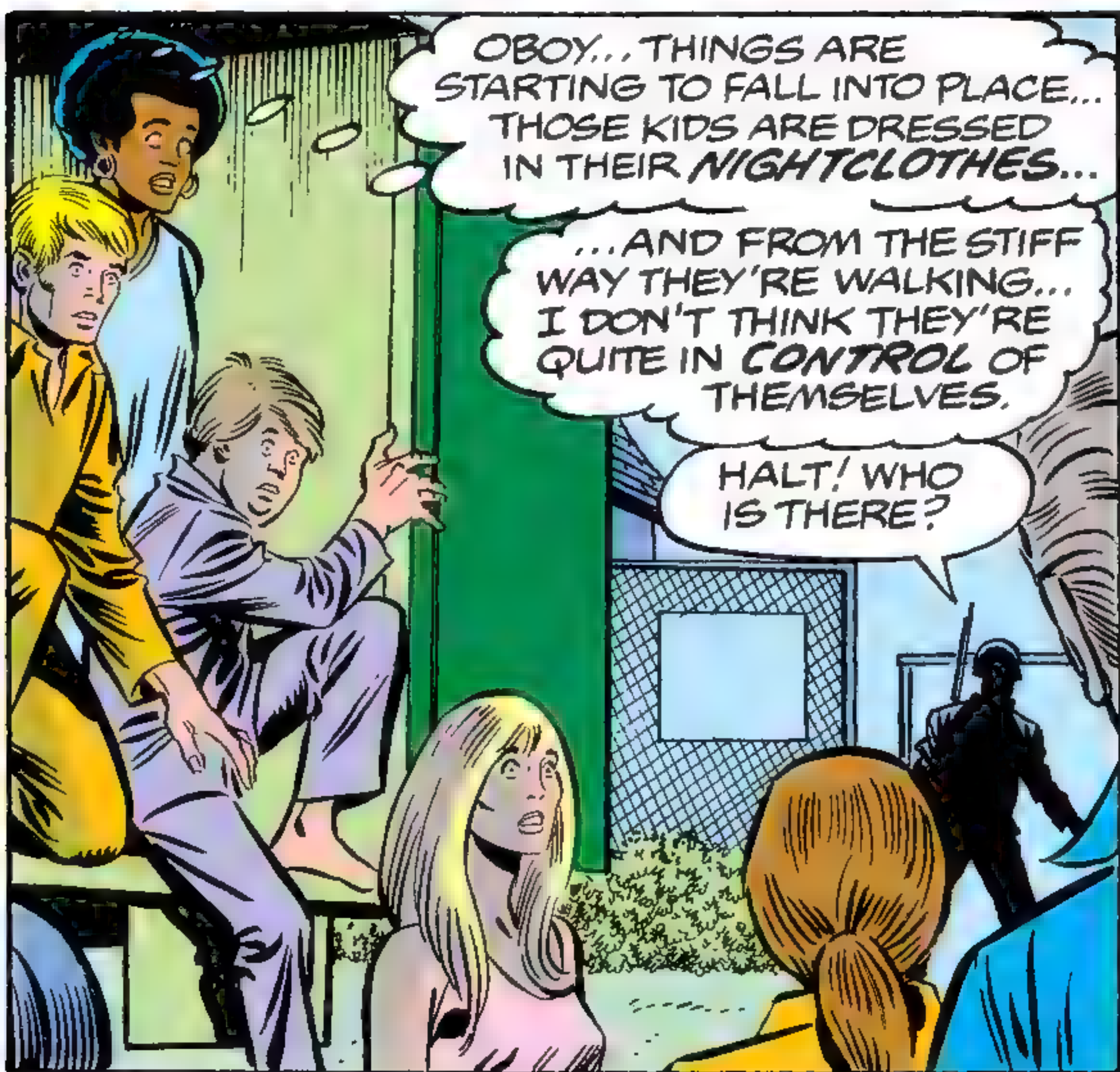
HMMM, THEY'RE HEADING NORTH... THAT STRIKES A CHORD, BUT I'LL BE HANGED IF I CAN REMEMBER WHAT--



AH **HA!** AN ARMY BASE... THAT CLARIFIES WHY THEY'RE USING ARMY TRUCKS.

BUT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.

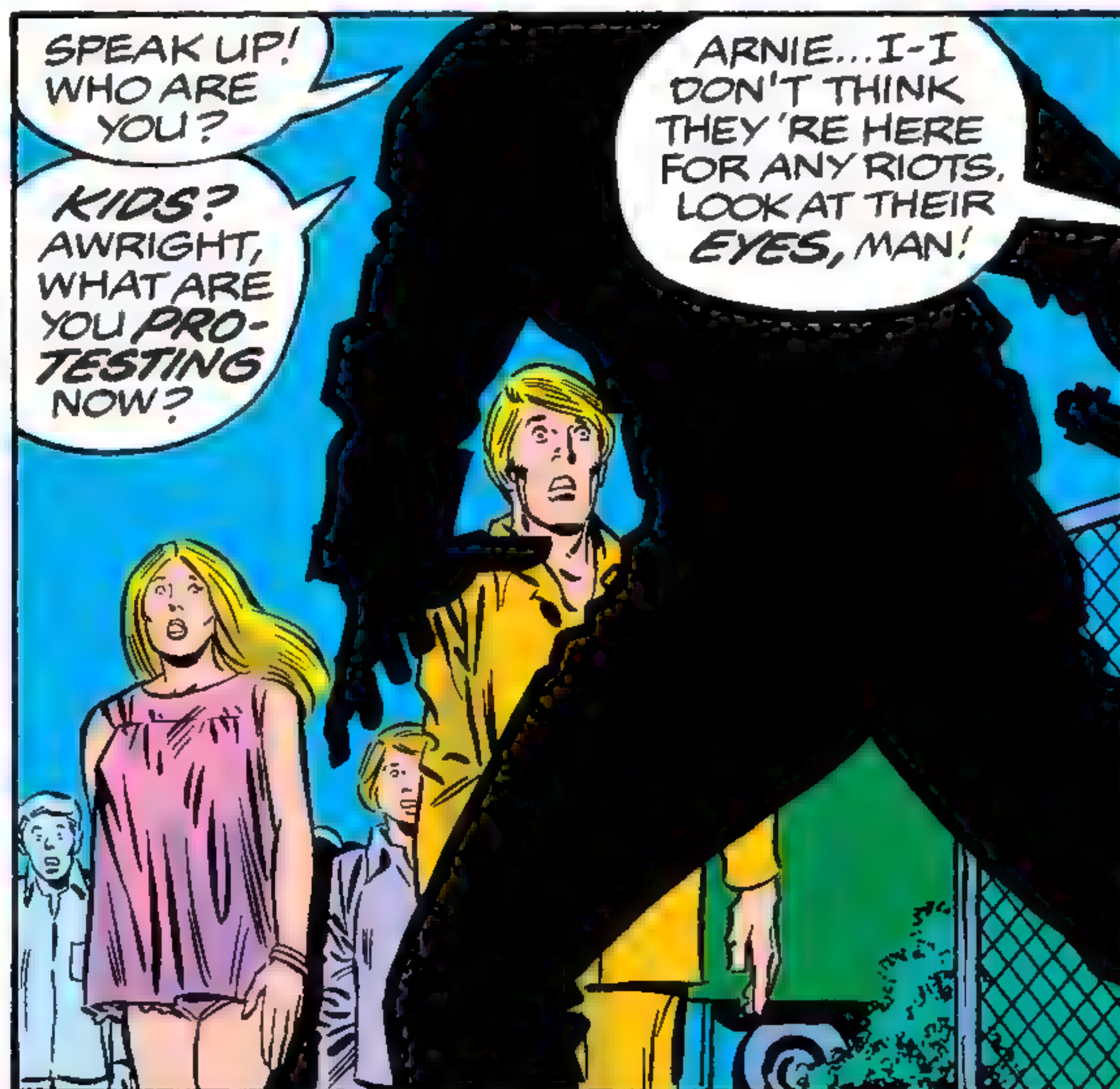
WHY ARE A BUNCH OF UNDERGRADS HEADING FOR AN ARMY BASE?



OBOY... THINGS ARE STARTING TO FALL INTO PLACE... THOSE KIDS ARE DRESSED IN THEIR **NIGHTCLOTHES**...

...AND FROM THE STIFF WAY THEY'RE WALKING... I DON'T THINK THEY'RE QUITE IN **CONTROL** OF THEMSELVES.

HALT! WHO IS THERE?



SPEAK UP! WHO ARE YOU?

KIDS? AWRIGHT, WHAT ARE YOU **PRO-TESTING** NOW?

ARNIE... I-I DON'T THINK THEY'RE HERE FOR ANY RIOTS. LOOK AT THEIR **EYES**, MAN!



SUDDENLY, AS IF THEY HAVE RECEIVED AN UNHEARD ORDER, THE STUDENTS LUNGE FORWARD, AND THE SHOCKED ARMY GUARDS FIND THEMSELVES OVERRUN...

GOOD HEAVEN... THEY'RE RUNNIN' RIGHT THROUGH US!

THEY **MUSTN'T** GET INSIDE... WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM.

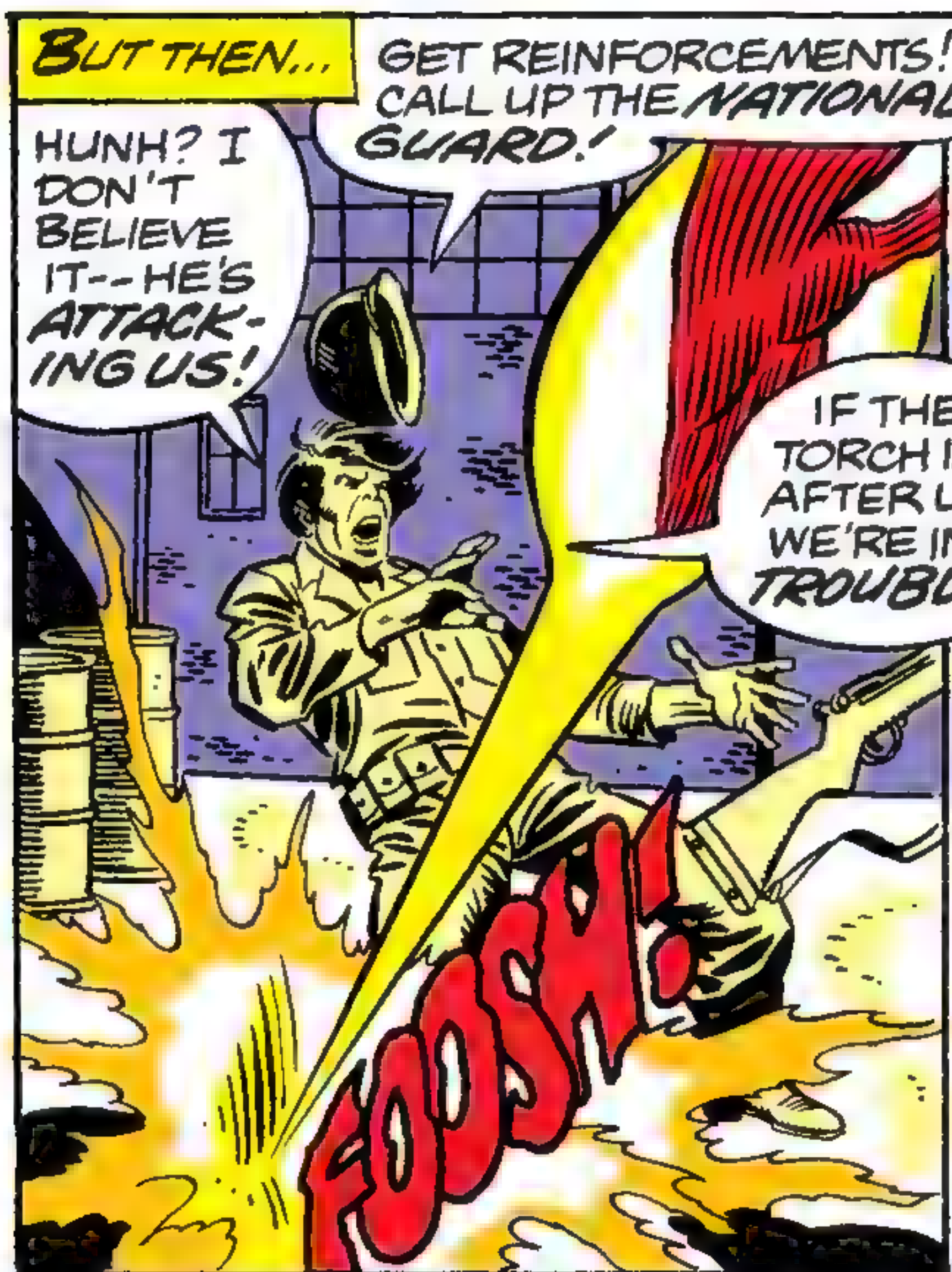


BUT...

HEY, LOOK-- WE'VE GOT SOME **HELP!**

IT'S THE **HUMAN TORCH!**

TORCH! DOWN HERE... WE NEED YOU!



BUT THEN...
HUNH? I DON'T BELIEVE IT-- HE'S ATTACKING US!

GET REINFORCEMENTS! CALL UP THE NATIONAL GUARD!

IF THE TORCH IS AFTER US-- WE'RE IN TROUBLE!



YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT, MISTER.

AWRIGHT, SO STORM'S BEING CONTROLLED BY SOMEONE... I'M SURE OF THAT NOW.



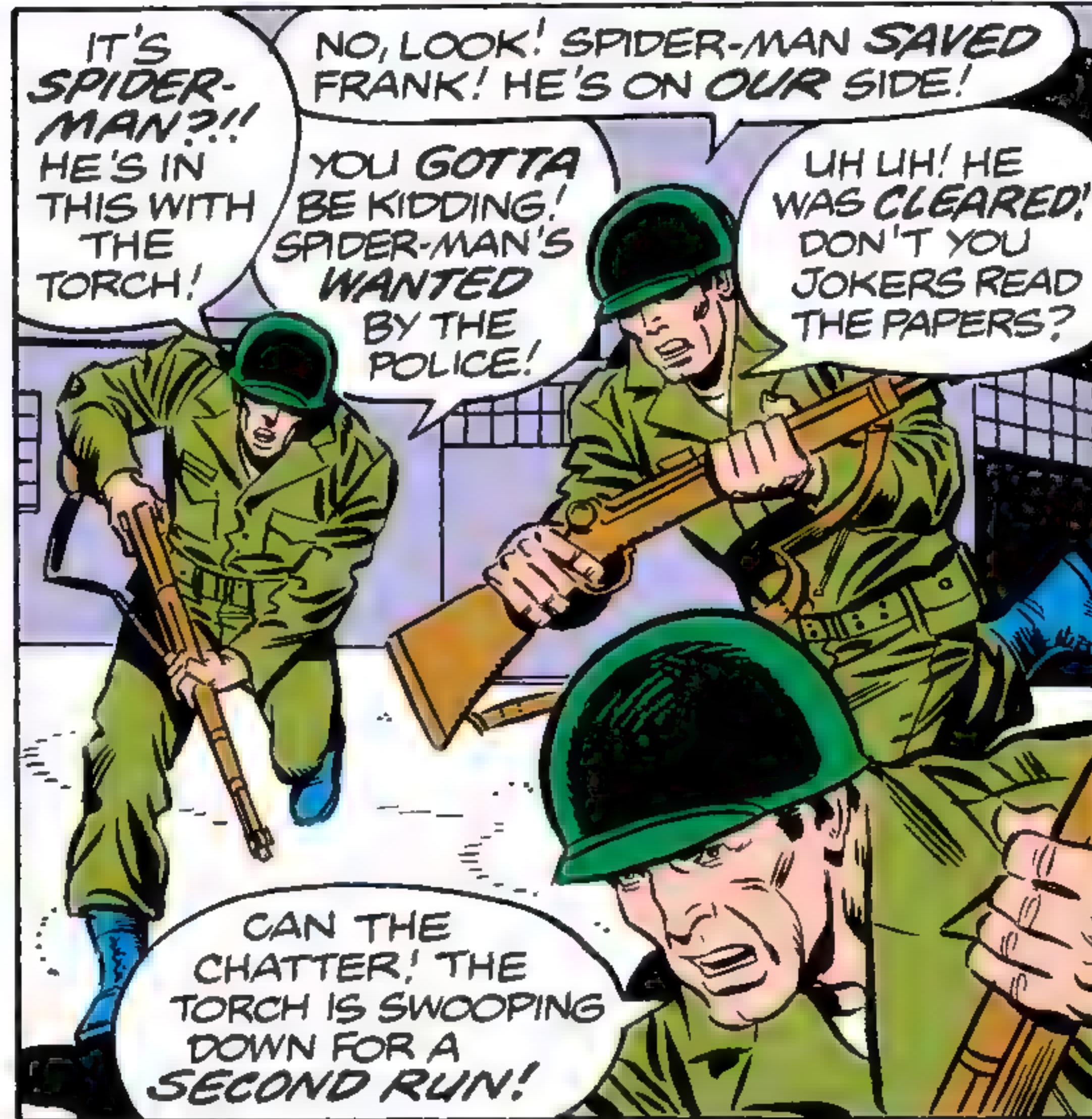
NEXT STEP? DO SOMETHING BEFORE ANYONE GETS HURT!



WHAA? SOMETHING'S SNAPPING ME AWAY FROM THE TORCH'S BLAST!

WEBBING? OH, NO... NO! NOW WE'VE GOT TWO OF 'EM AFTER US!

G-G-GEORGE!?! FWAT!



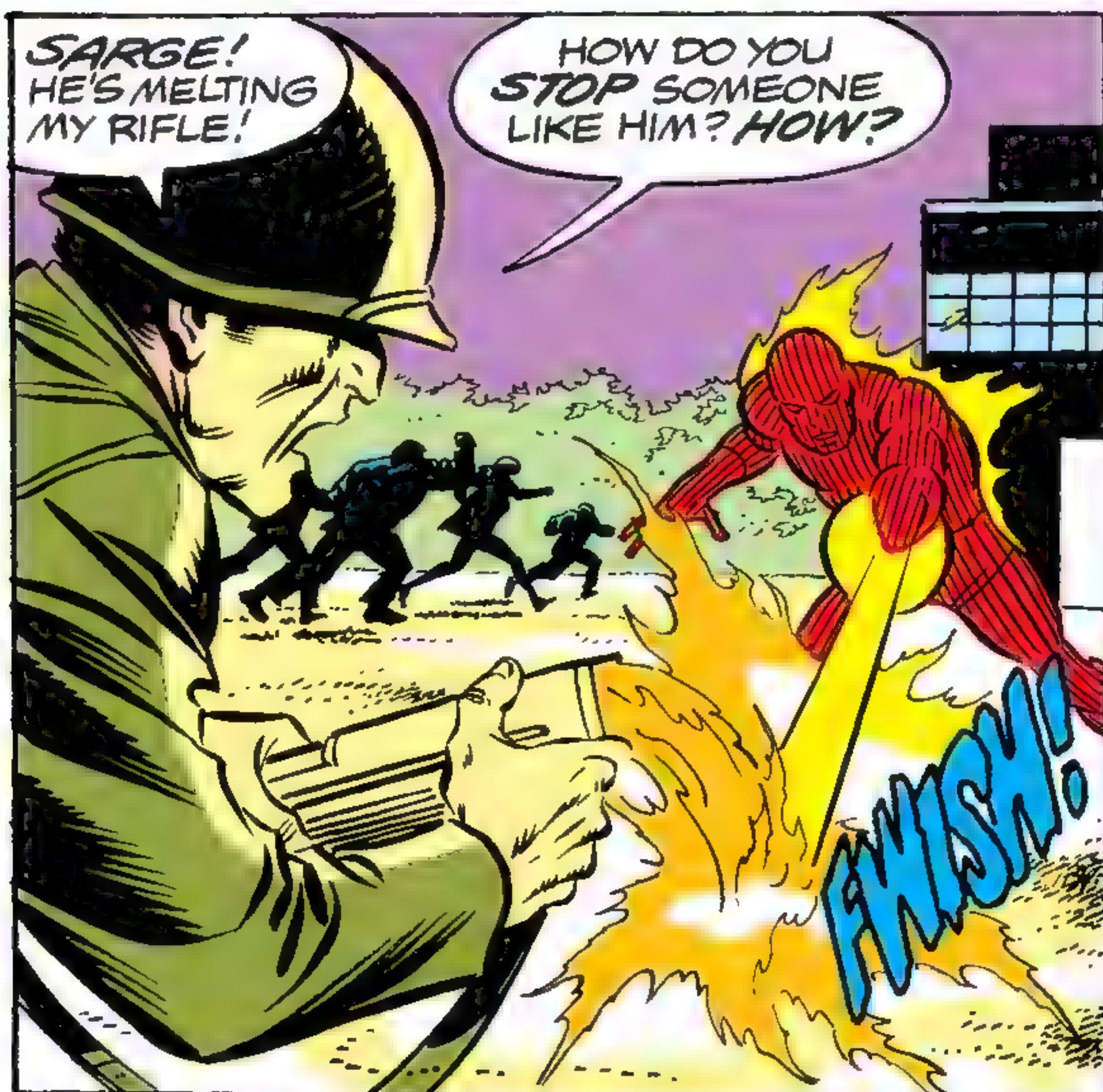
IT'S SPIDER-MAN?! HE'S IN THIS WITH THE TORCH!

NO, LOOK! SPIDER-MAN SAVED FRANK! HE'S ON OUR SIDE!

YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING! SPIDER-MAN'S WANTED BY THE POLICE!

UH UH! HE WAS CLEARED! DON'T YOU JOKERS READ THE PAPERS?

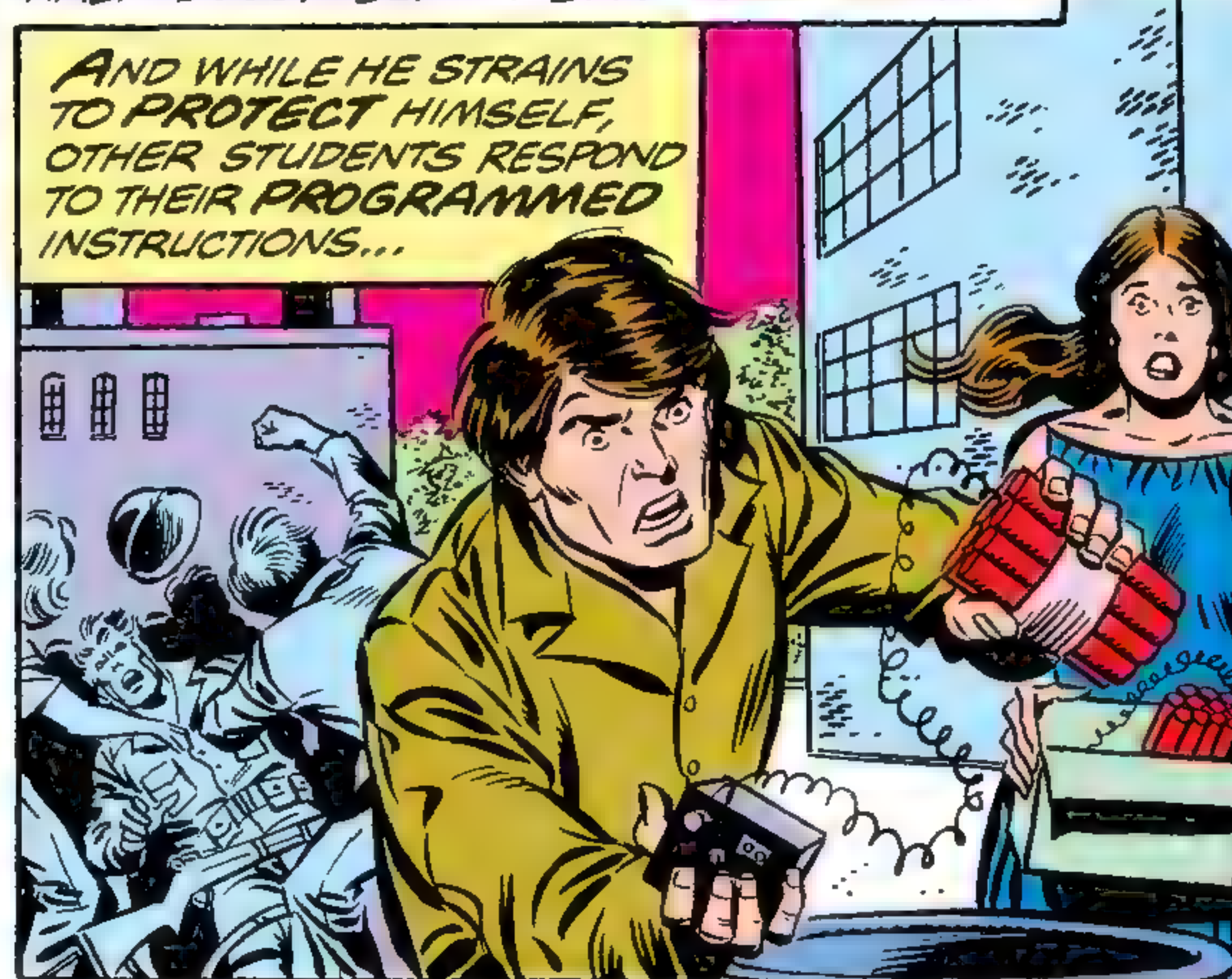
CAN THE CHATTER! THE TORCH IS SWOOPING DOWN FOR A SECOND RUN!



SARGE! HE'S MELTING MY RIFLE!

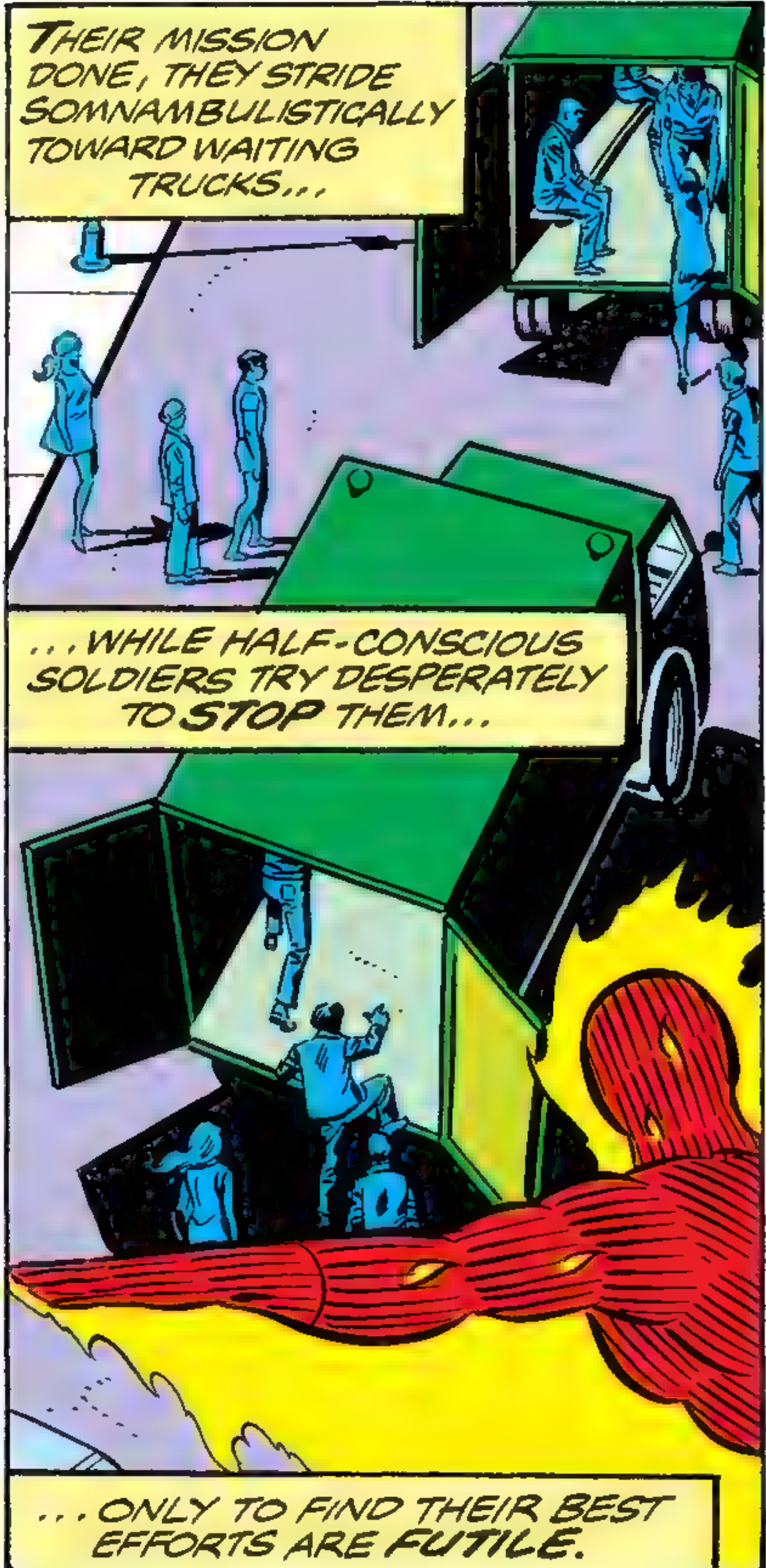
HOW DO YOU STOP SOMEONE LIKE HIM? HOW?

BUT THE SERGEANT CAN NO LONGER ANSWER... FOR HE SUDDENLY FINDS HIMSELF PUMMELED BY A HALF-DOZEN BLANK-EYED TEENAGERS...



AND WHILE HE STRAINS TO PROTECT HIMSELF, OTHER STUDENTS RESPOND TO THEIR PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTIONS...

...TO HIDE SEVERAL BOUND-TOGETHER STICKS OF HIGHLY DANGEROUS DYNAMITE AT CERTAIN PRE-DESIGNATED LOCATIONS...



THEIR MISSION DONE, THEY STRIDE SOMNAMBULISTICALLY TOWARD WAITING TRUCKS...

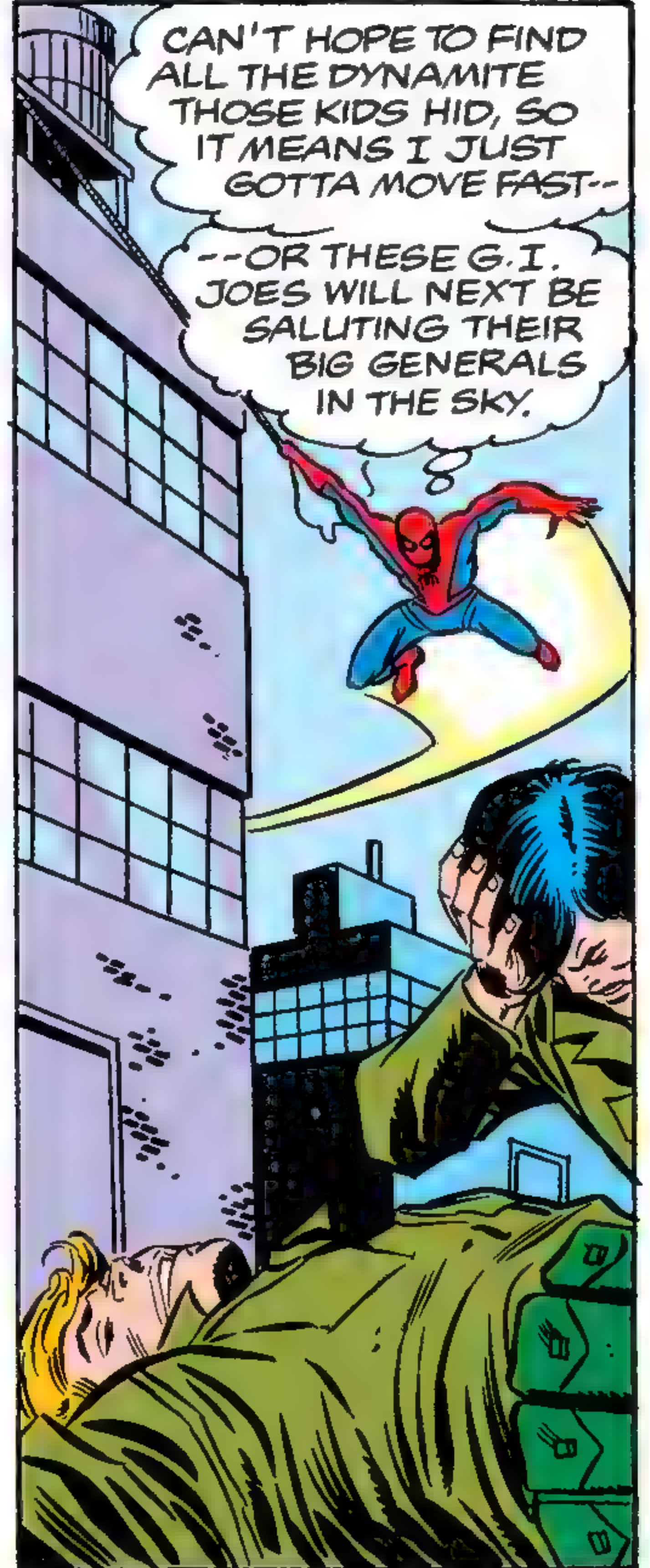
...WHILE HALF-CONSCIOUS SOLDIERS TRY DESPERATELY TO STOP THEM...

... ONLY TO FIND THEIR BEST EFFORTS ARE FUTILE.



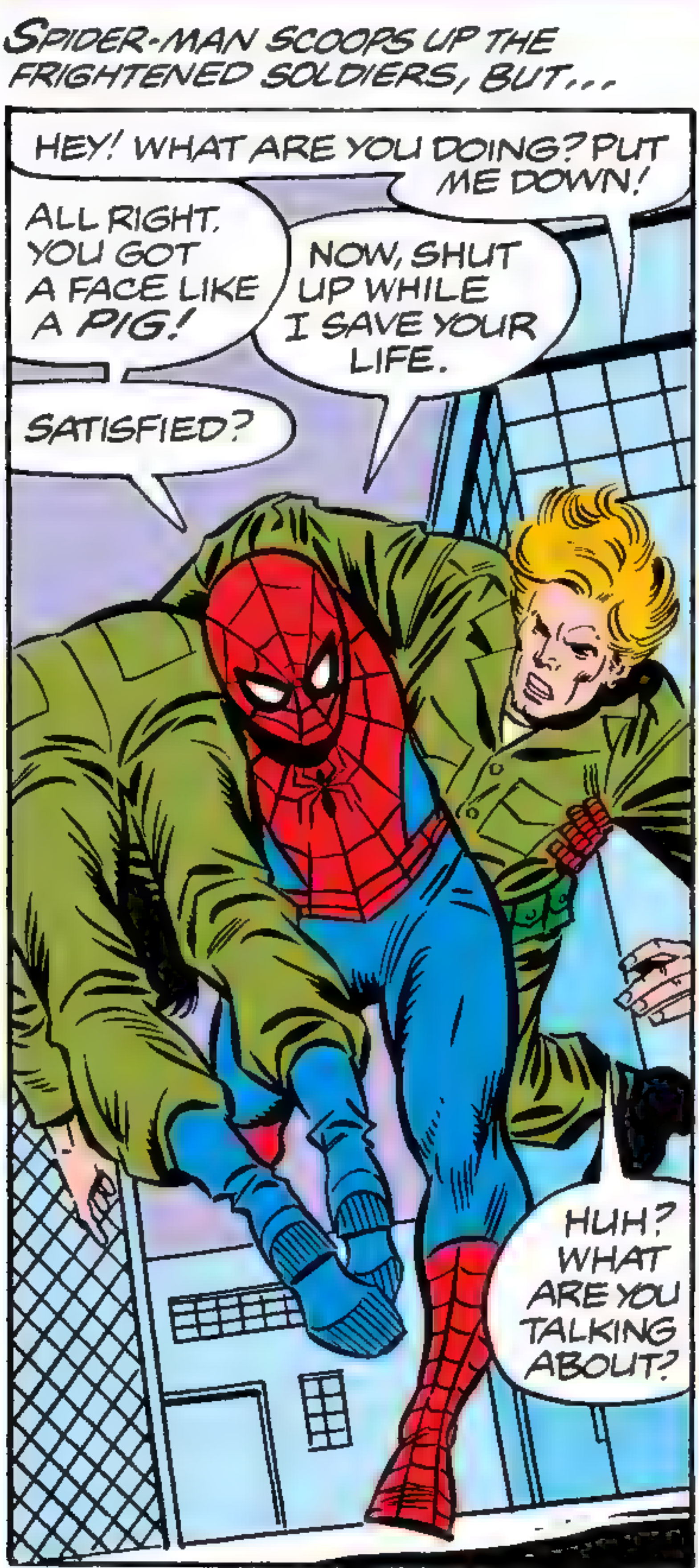
NO NEED TO FOLLOW 'EM. I'VE GOT A PRETTY GOOD HUNCH WHERE THEY'RE GOING.

SO, UNLESS MY SPIDER-SENSES HAVE TAKEN A TRIP, I THINK I'M NEEDED HERE.



CAN'T HOPE TO FIND ALL THE DYNAMITE THOSE KIDS HID, SO IT MEANS I JUST GOTTA MOVE FAST--

--OR THESE G.I. JOES WILL NEXT BE SALUTING THEIR BIG GENERALS IN THE SKY.



SPIDER-MAN SCOOPS UP THE FRIGHTENED SOLDIERS, BUT...

HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? PUT ME DOWN!

ALL RIGHT, YOU GOT A FACE LIKE A PIG!

NOW, SHUT UP WHILE I SAVE YOUR LIFE.

SATISFIED?

HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



SETTLE BACK, MISTER, AND YOU'LL SEE FOR YOURSELF.



SPIDEY RACES BACK INTO THE DOOMED BASE AND GRABS TWO MORE UNCONSCIOUS SOLDIERS. HIS SENSES EVER-ALERT, HE FLINGS THEM OVER HIS SHOULDERS AND SWINGS TO SAFETY...

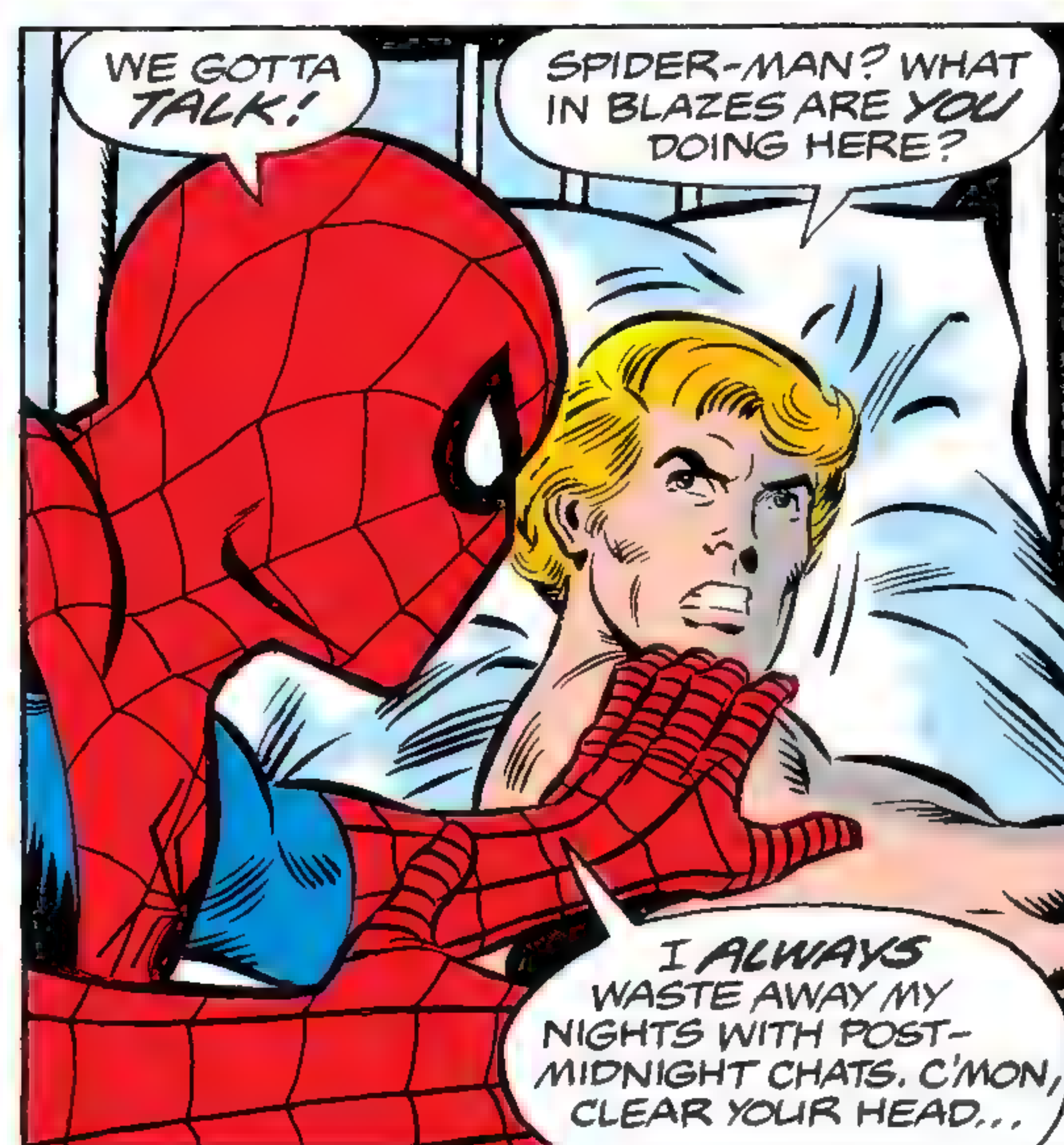
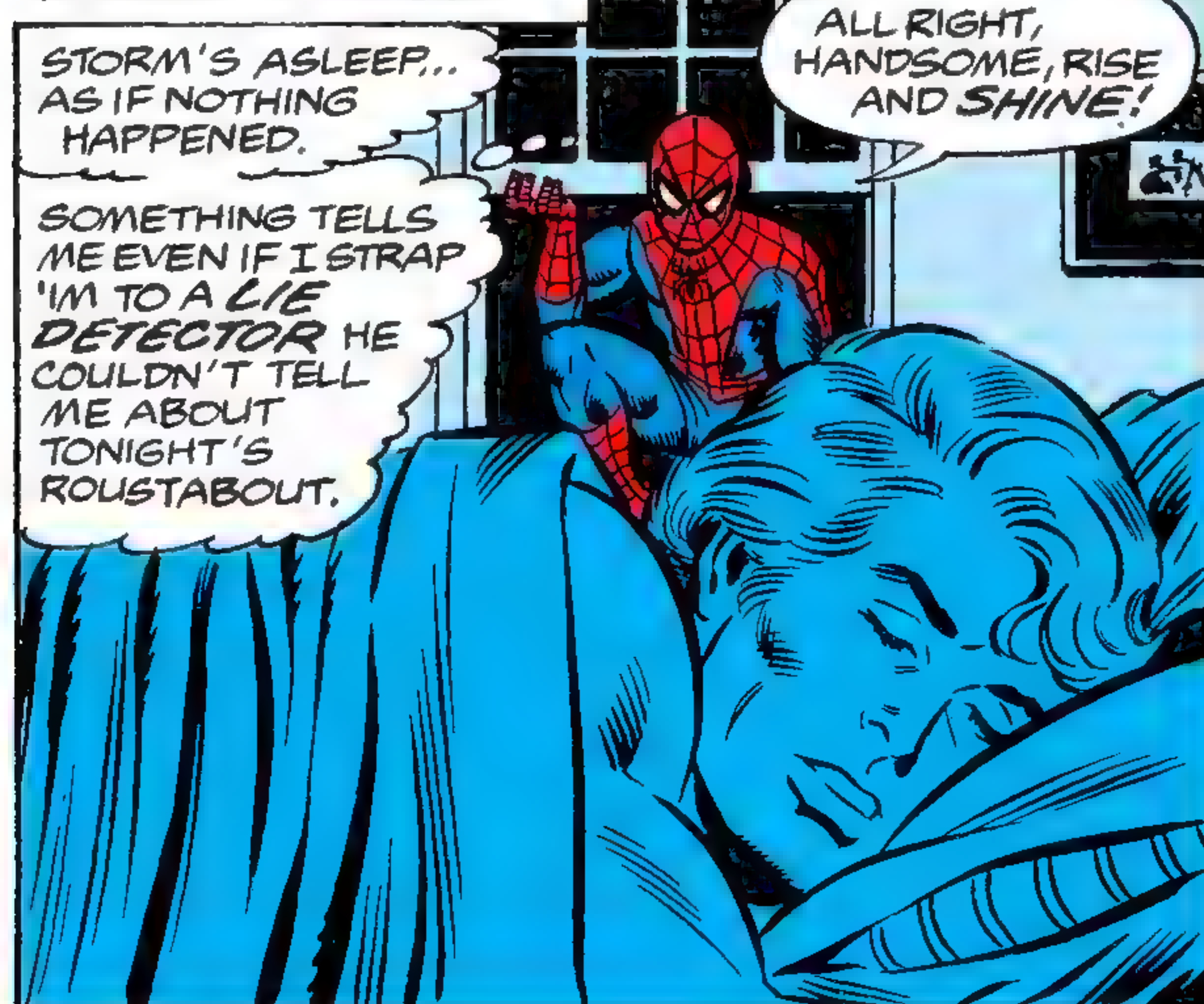
THEN HE RETURNS TO THE BASE, TIME AND TIME AGAIN, UNTIL...

I THINK THAT'S IT... THE PLACE IS CLEAR--

JUST ABOUT TIME... MY SPIDER-SENSES ARE BUZZING LIKE A BEEHIVE!



LET'S LEAVE THE STARTLED TRUSSED-UP GUARD TO HIS OWN THOUGHTS AND RETURN TO THE QUIET CAMPUS OF SECURITY COLLEGE...

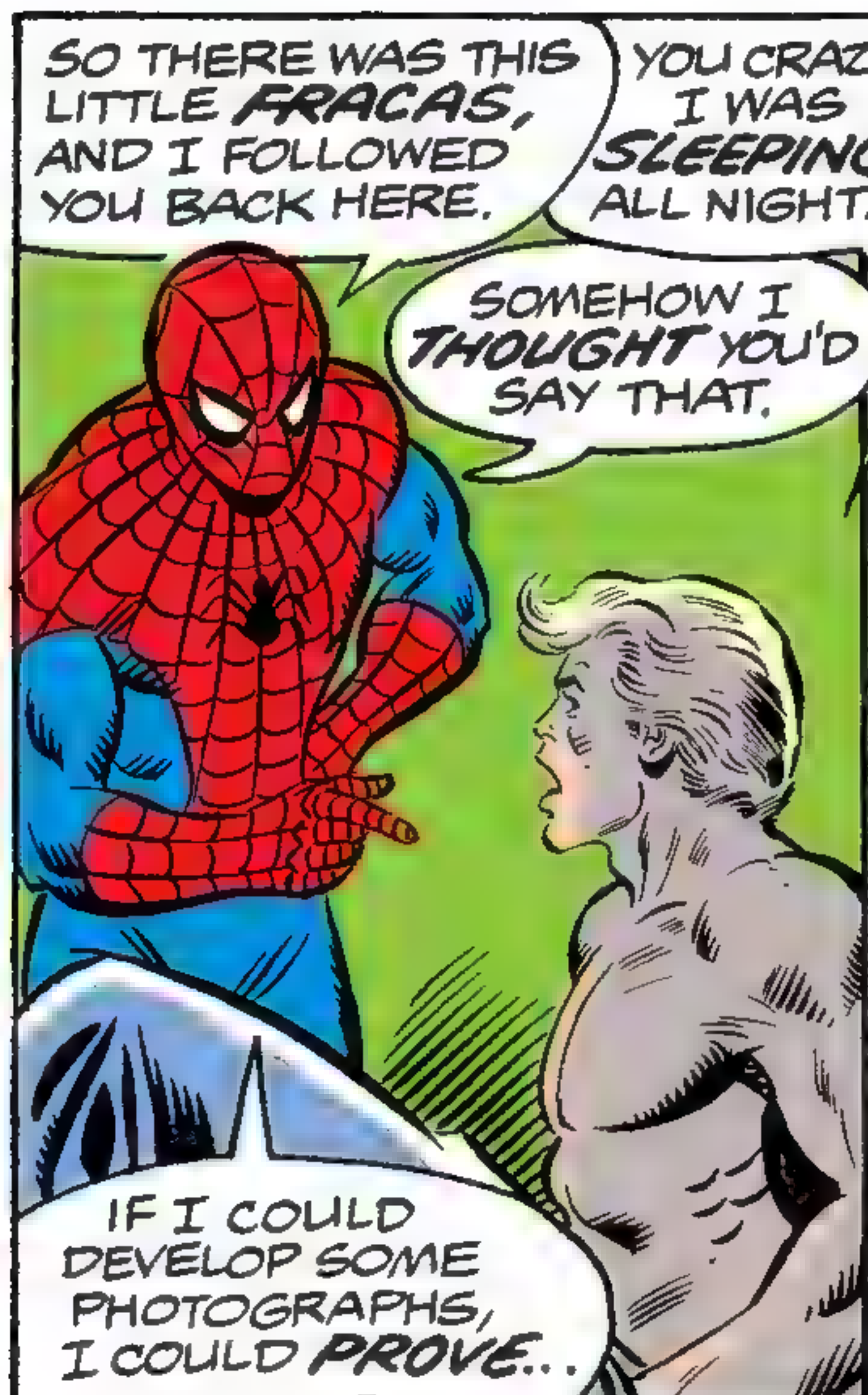


SO THERE WAS THIS LITTLE **FRACAS**, AND I FOLLOWED YOU BACK HERE.

YOU CRAZY? I WAS **SLEEPING** ALL NIGHT.

SOMEHOW I **THOUGHT** YOU'D SAY THAT.

IF I COULD DEVELOP SOME PHOTOGRAPHS, I COULD **PROVE**...



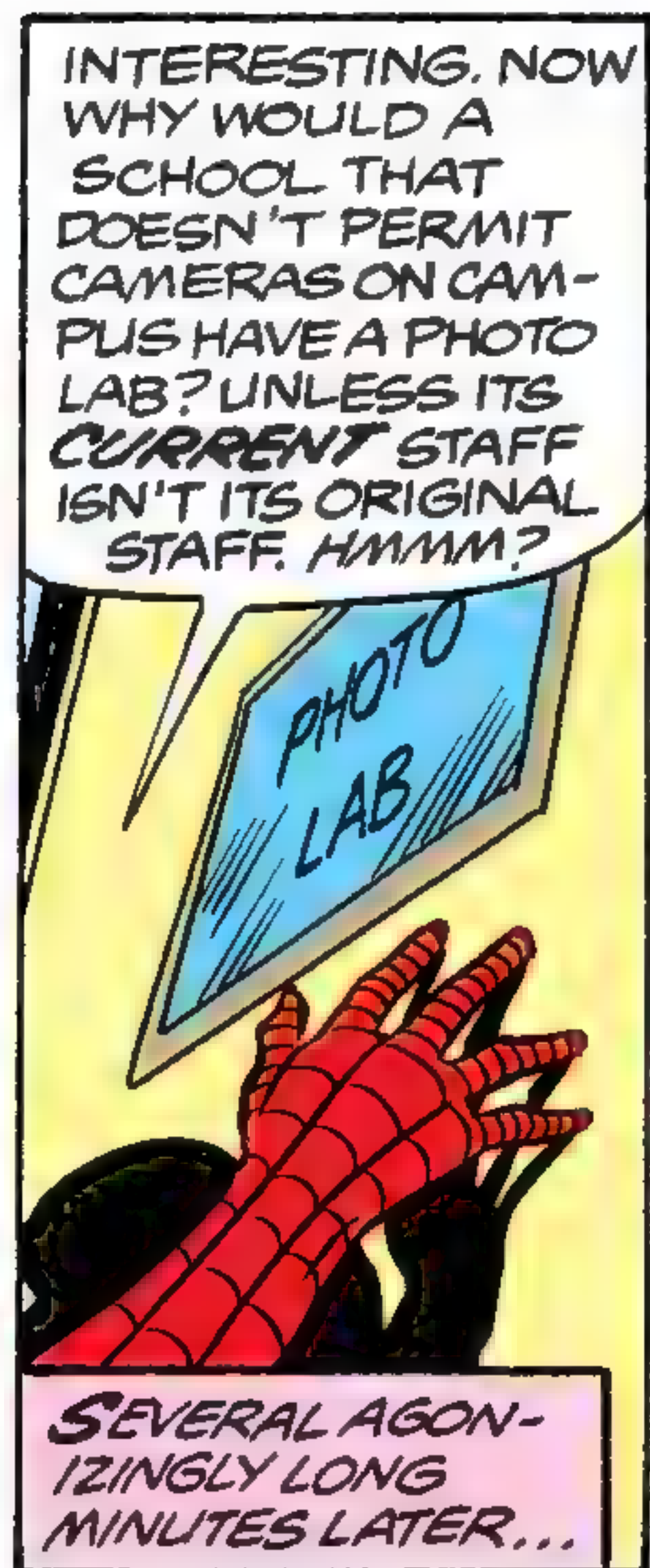
WAIT A SEC... I SEEM TO REMEMBER PASSING BY A PHOTO LAB. C'MON, I'LL SHOW YOU.



INTERESTING. NOW WHY WOULD A SCHOOL THAT DOESN'T PERMIT CAMERAS ON CAMPUS HAVE A PHOTO LAB? UNLESS ITS **CURRENT** STAFF ISN'T ITS ORIGINAL STAFF. HMMM?

PHOTO LAB

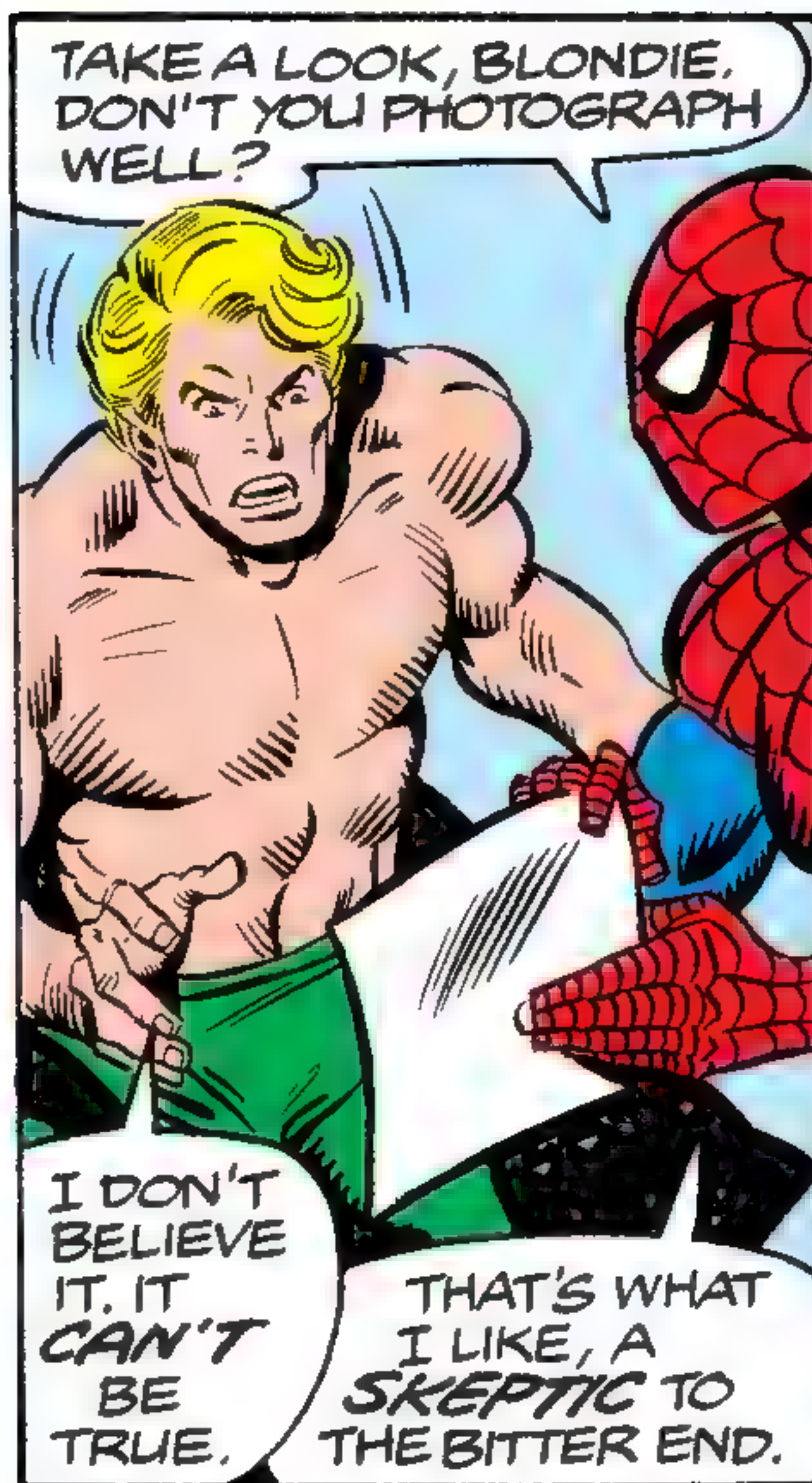
SEVERAL AGON-IZINGLY LONG MINUTES LATER...



TAKE A LOOK, BLONDIE. DON'T YOU PHOTOGRAPH WELL?

I DON'T BELIEVE IT. IT **CAN'T** BE TRUE.

THAT'S WHAT I LIKE, A **SKEPTIC** TO THE BITTER END.



I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING, BUT THAT'S ME... AND THOSE OTHER PHOTOS... SPIDER-MAN, WHAT'S GOING ON?



AS A HAGGARD WALL-CRAWLER FILLS IN A PUZZLED JOHNNY STORM...

MONOCLE! THERE WAS TROUBLE! SPIDER-MAN INTERFERED WITH THE ARMY JOB.

WE GOT AWAY, BUT WE DIDN'T GET THE **WEAPONS!**

NO! MY PLANS WERE NOT SUPPOSED TO FAIL. HARGROVE, CAN IT BE THAT MISTER STORM IS NOT UNDER OUR CONTROL AS I SUSPECTED?

SCAN HIM, HARGROVE-- I MUST SEE IF...



SUDDENLY...

MONOCLE! YOU HAVE BETRAYED THE ENCLAVE! WE ORDERED THE TERMINATION OF YOUR MISSION.

NUMBER ONE DEMANDS THE REASON FOR YOUR INSUB-ORDINATION!



REASON? YOU FOOL, I HAVE ALL THE REASON IN THE WORLD. THE MONOCLE NOW WORKS FOR HIMSELF!

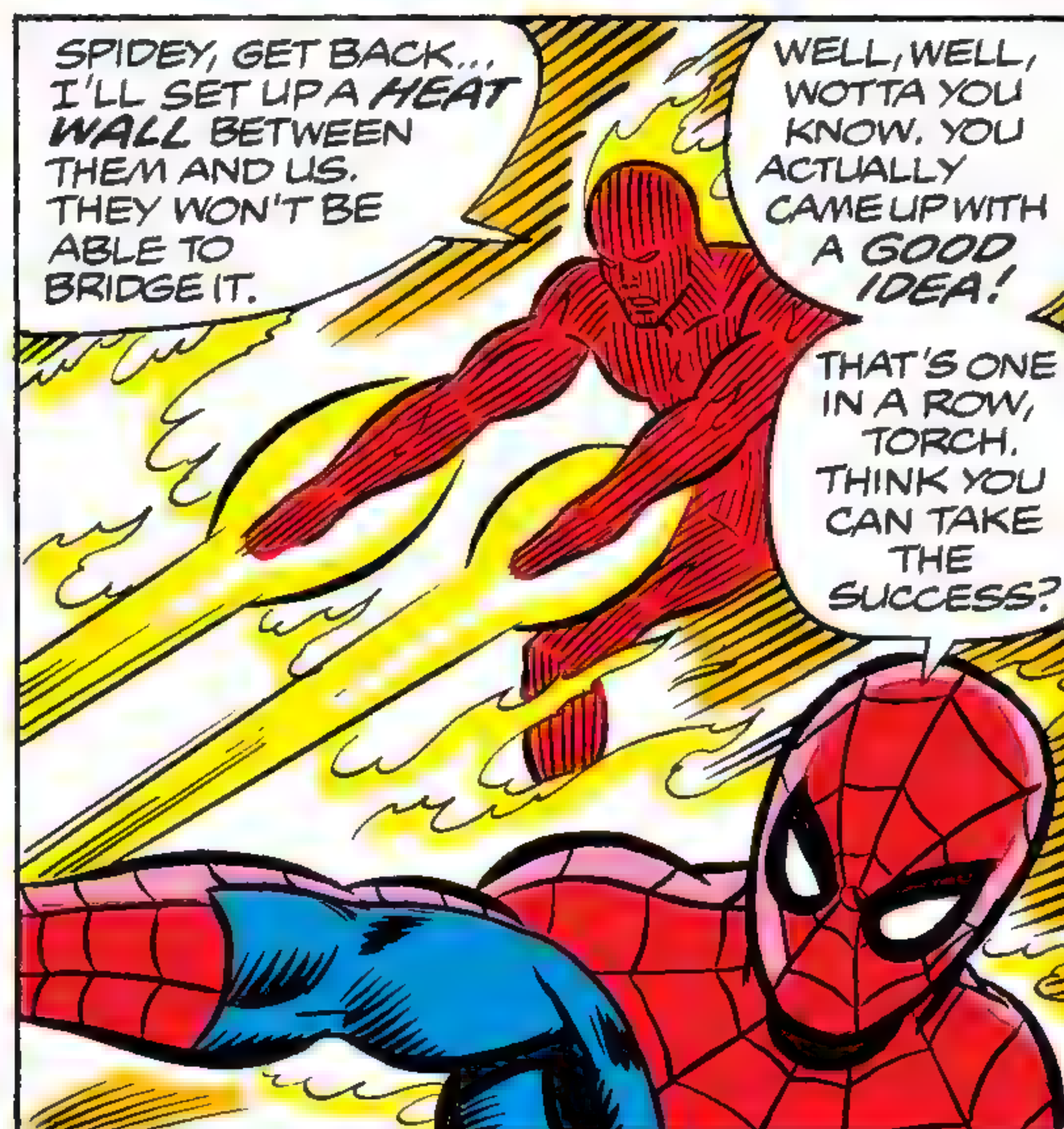
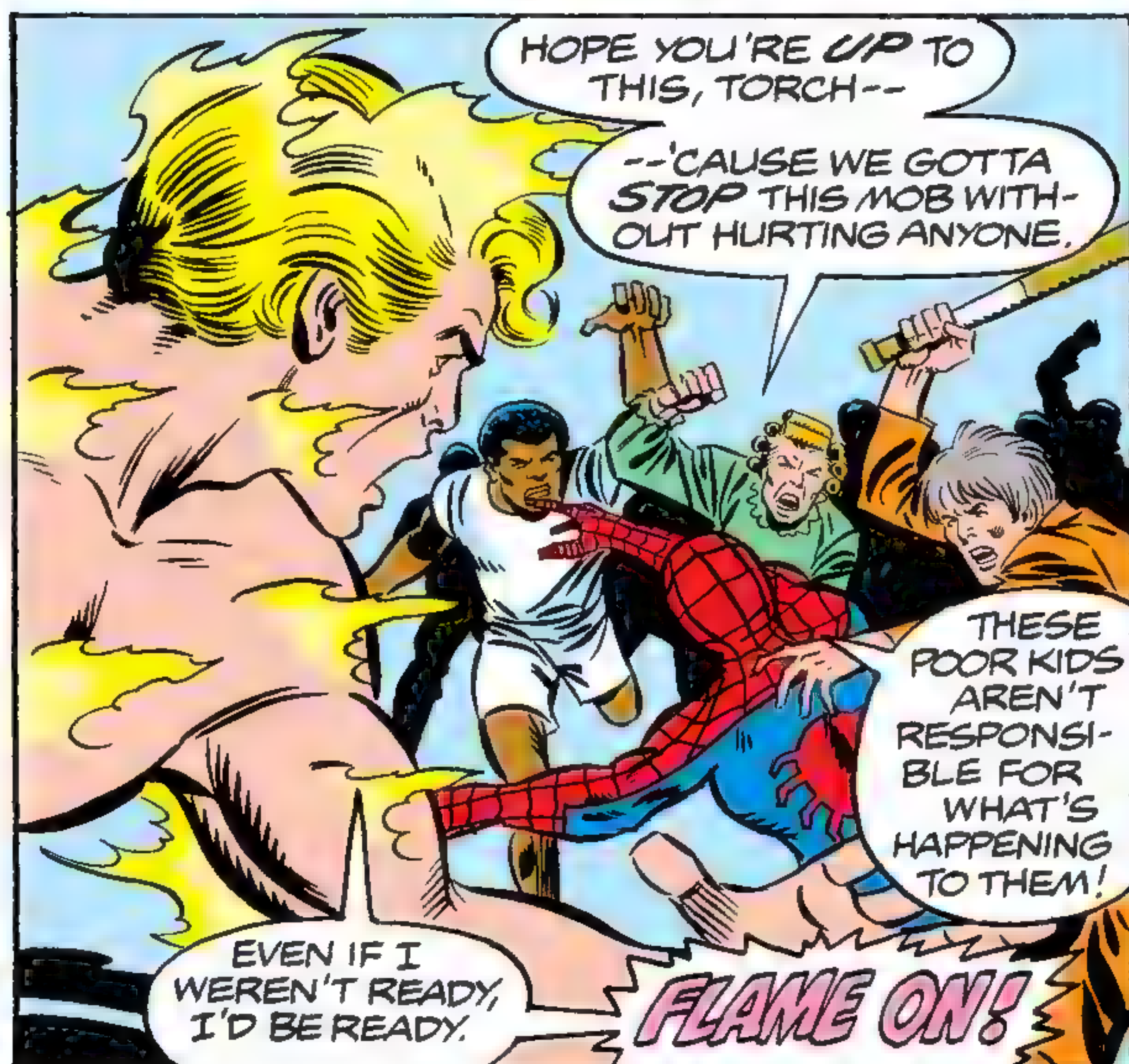
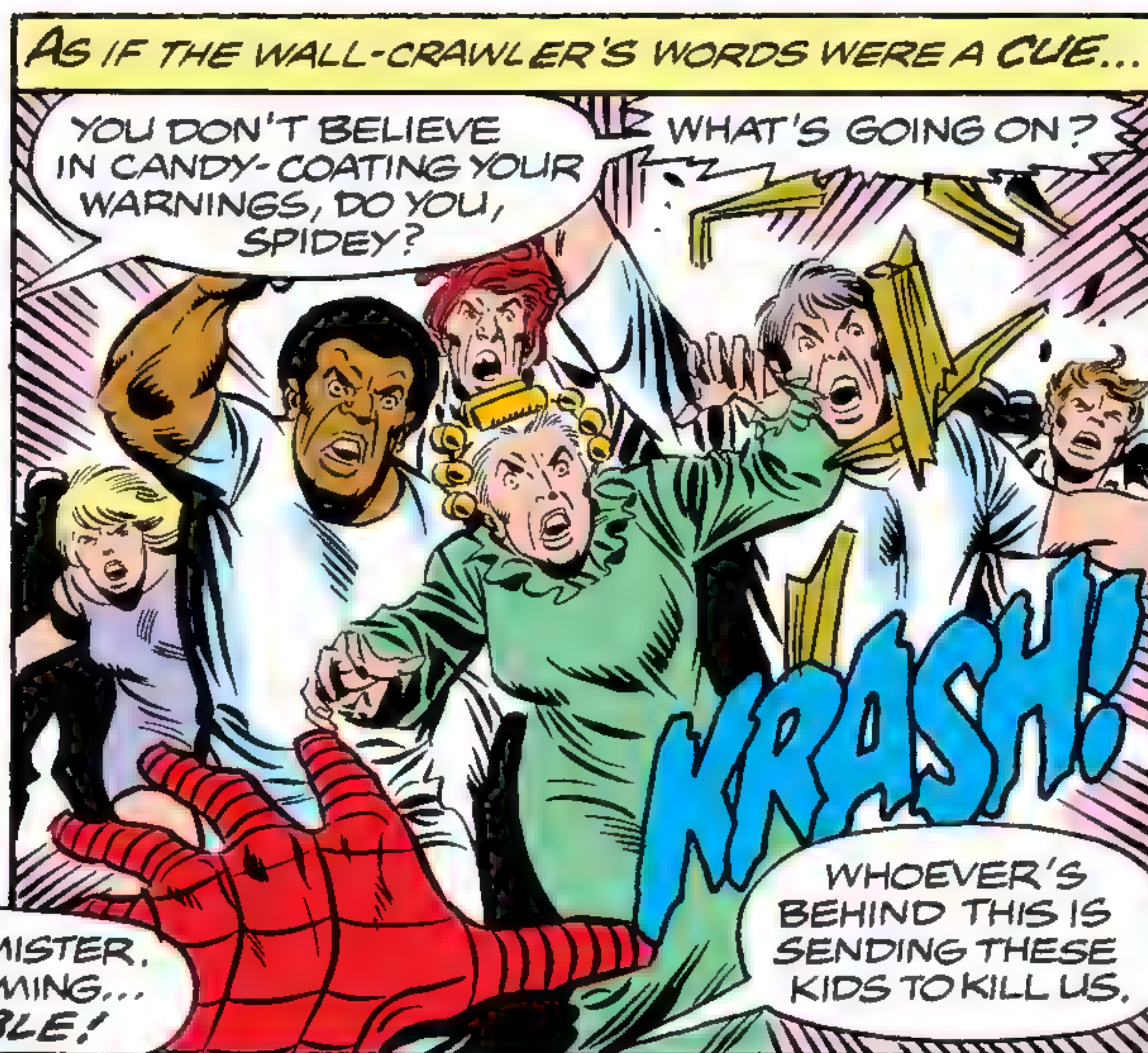
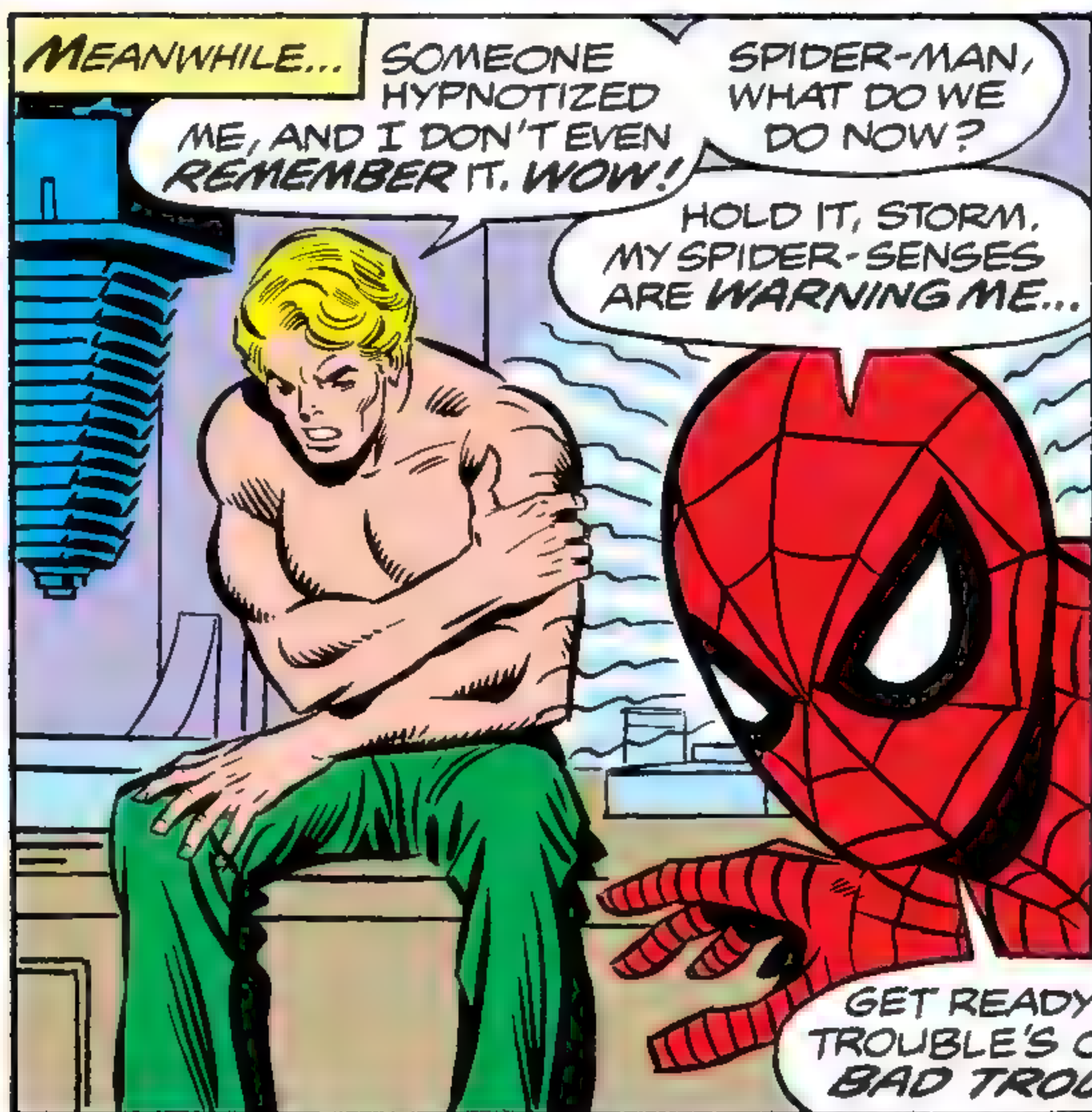
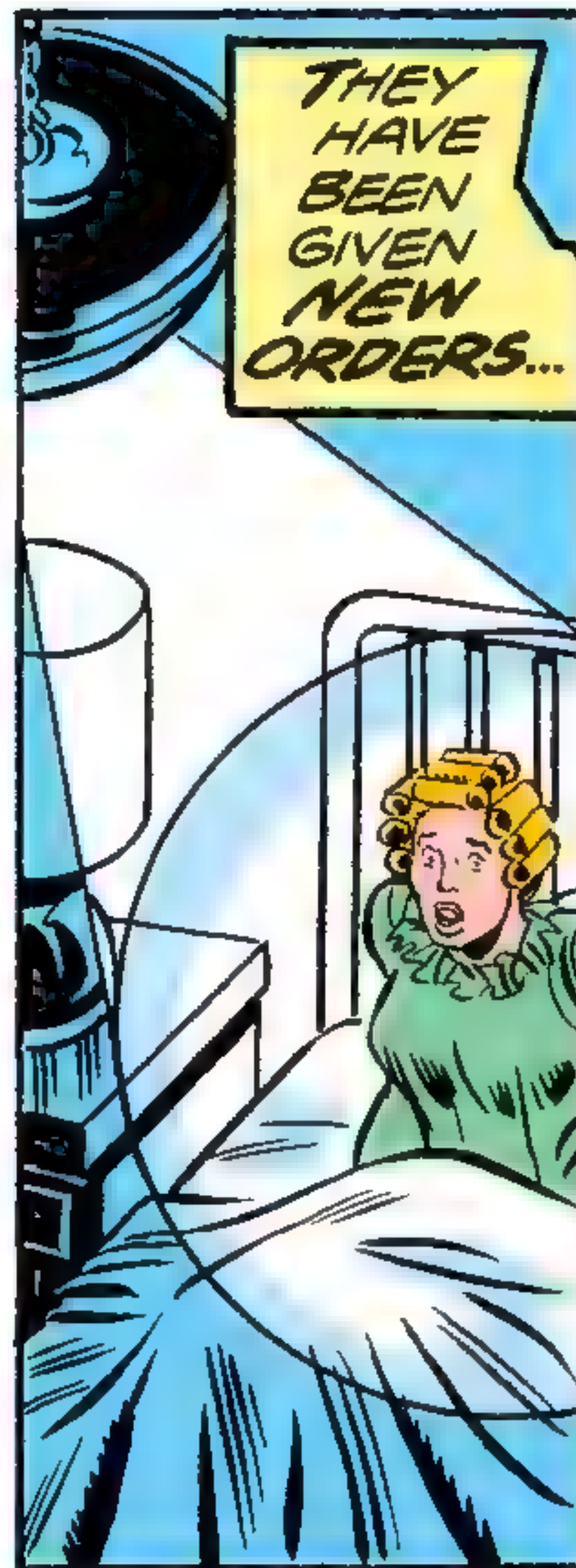
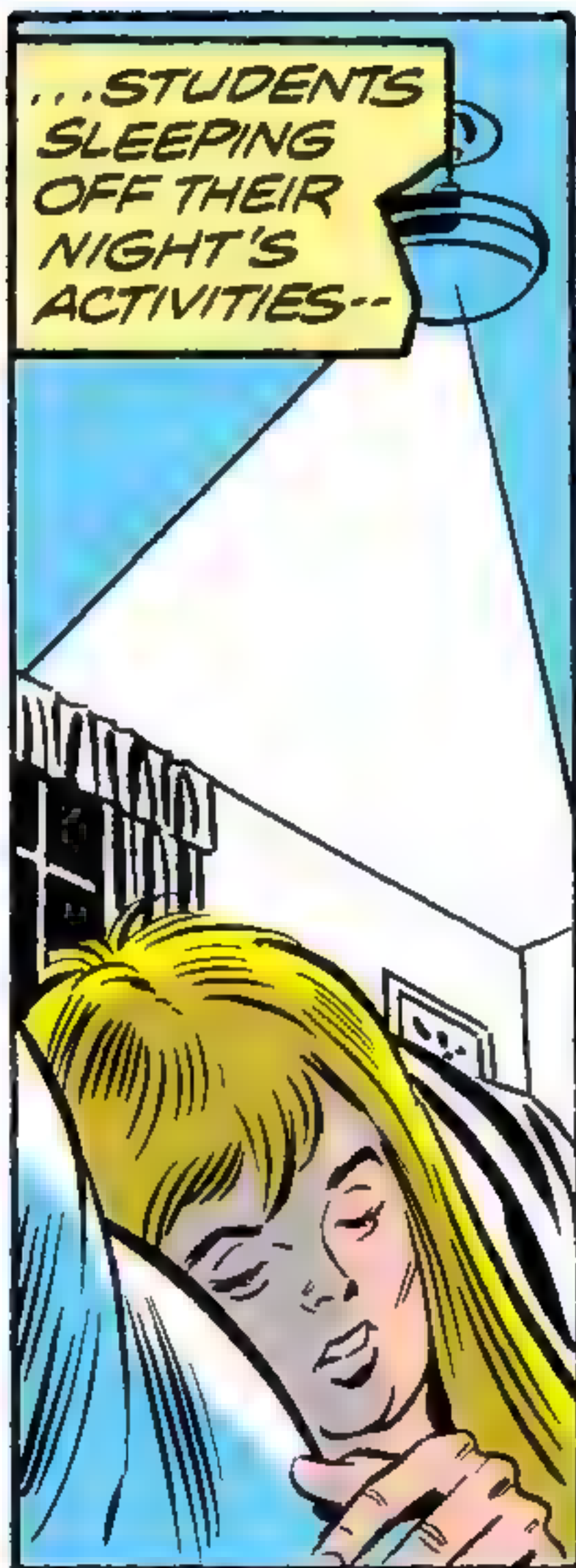
YOU AND NUMBER ONE CAN GO TO **BLAZES** FOR ALL I CARE.

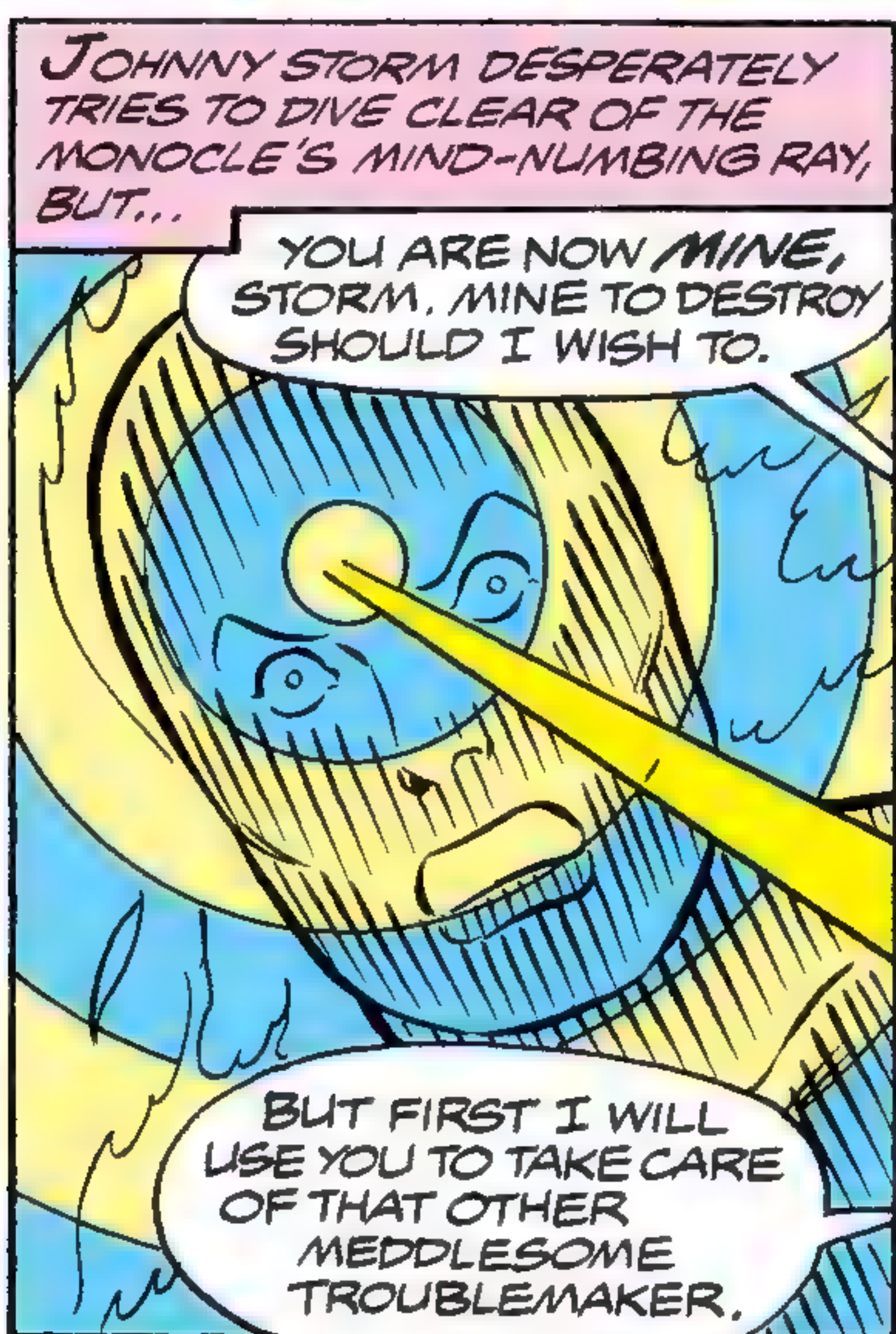
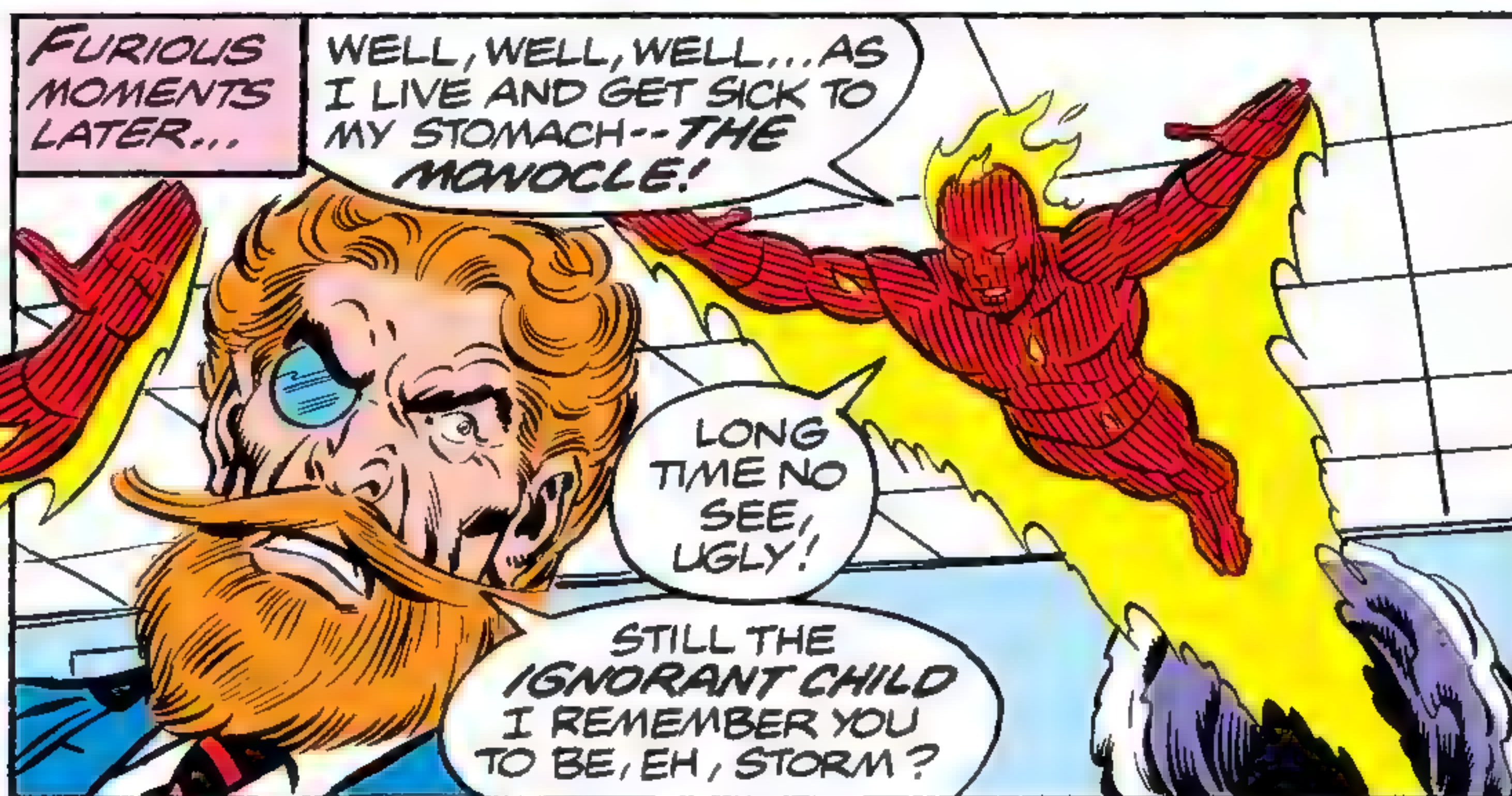
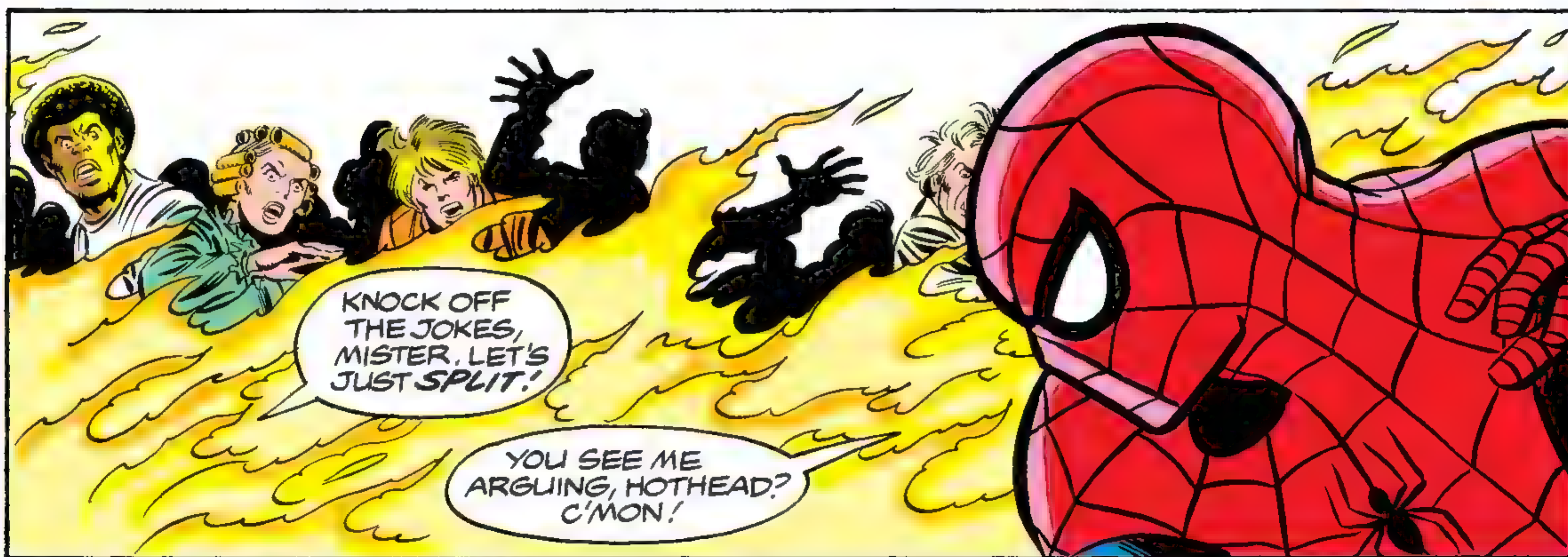


HARGROVE! YOU HAVE YOUR ORDERS. **EXECUTE THEM!**

SHRAK!







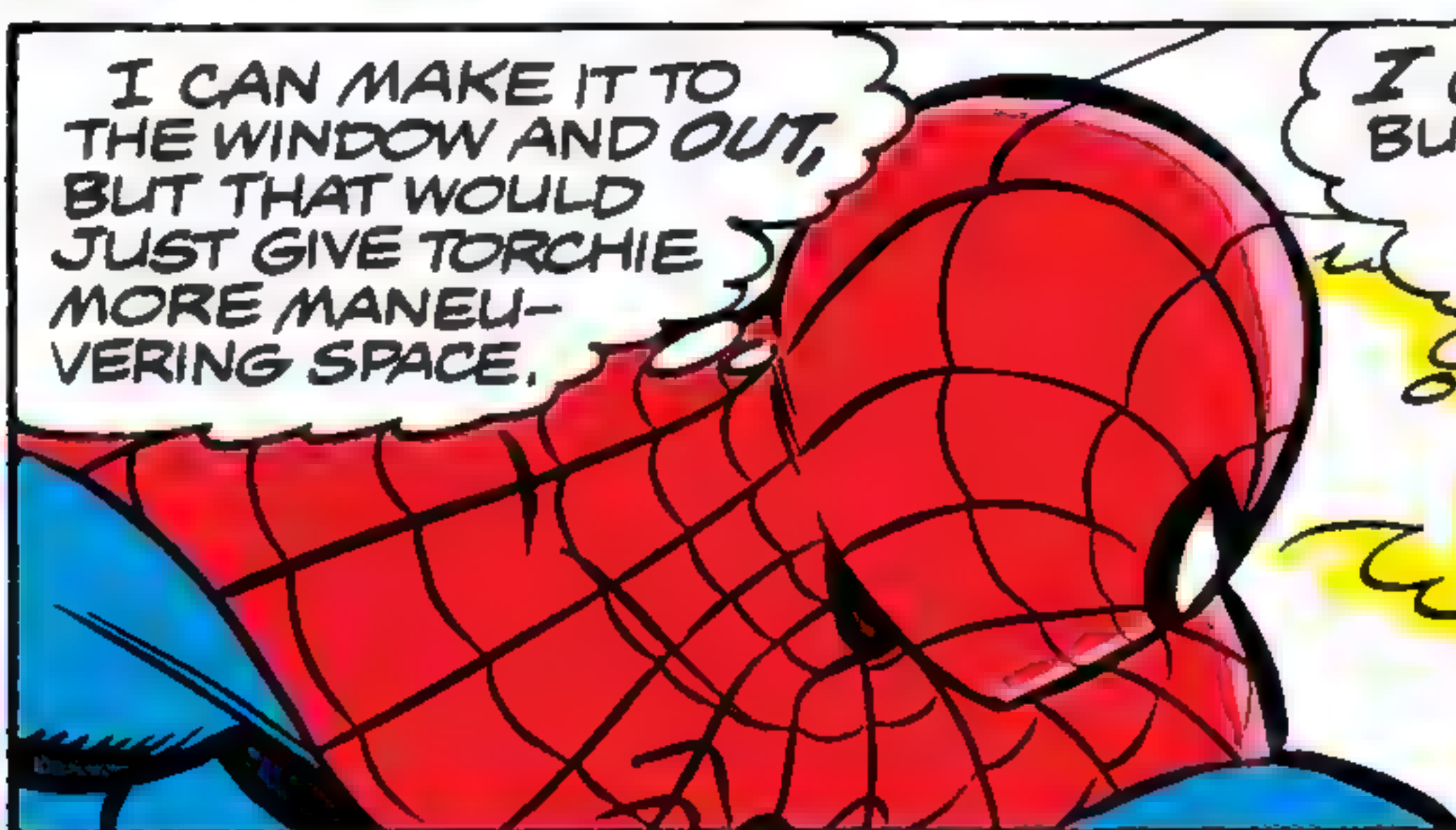


DON'T KNOW HOW RED DID IT, BUT HE'S GOT THE TORCH PSYCHED UP TO ROAST ME.

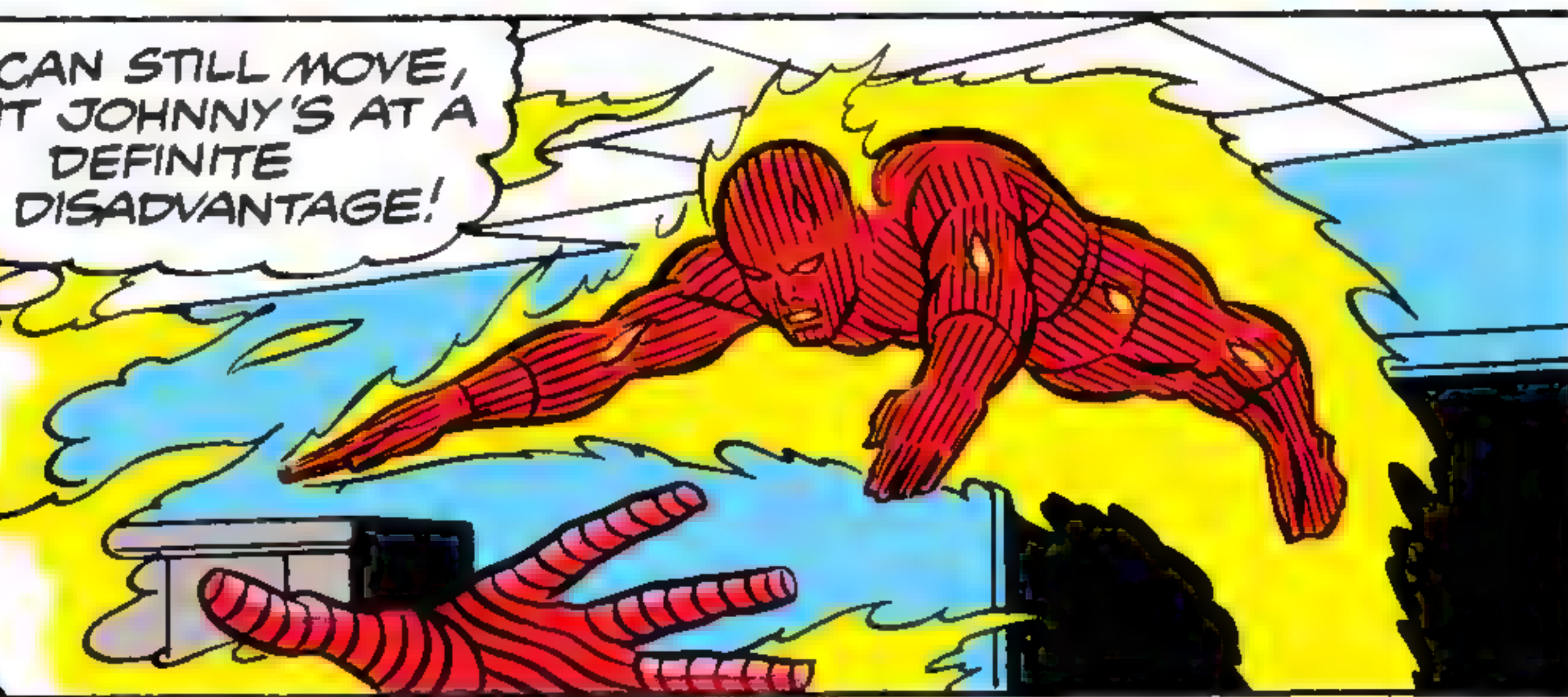
NO WAY TO SNAP JOHNNY OUT OF HIS POWER.



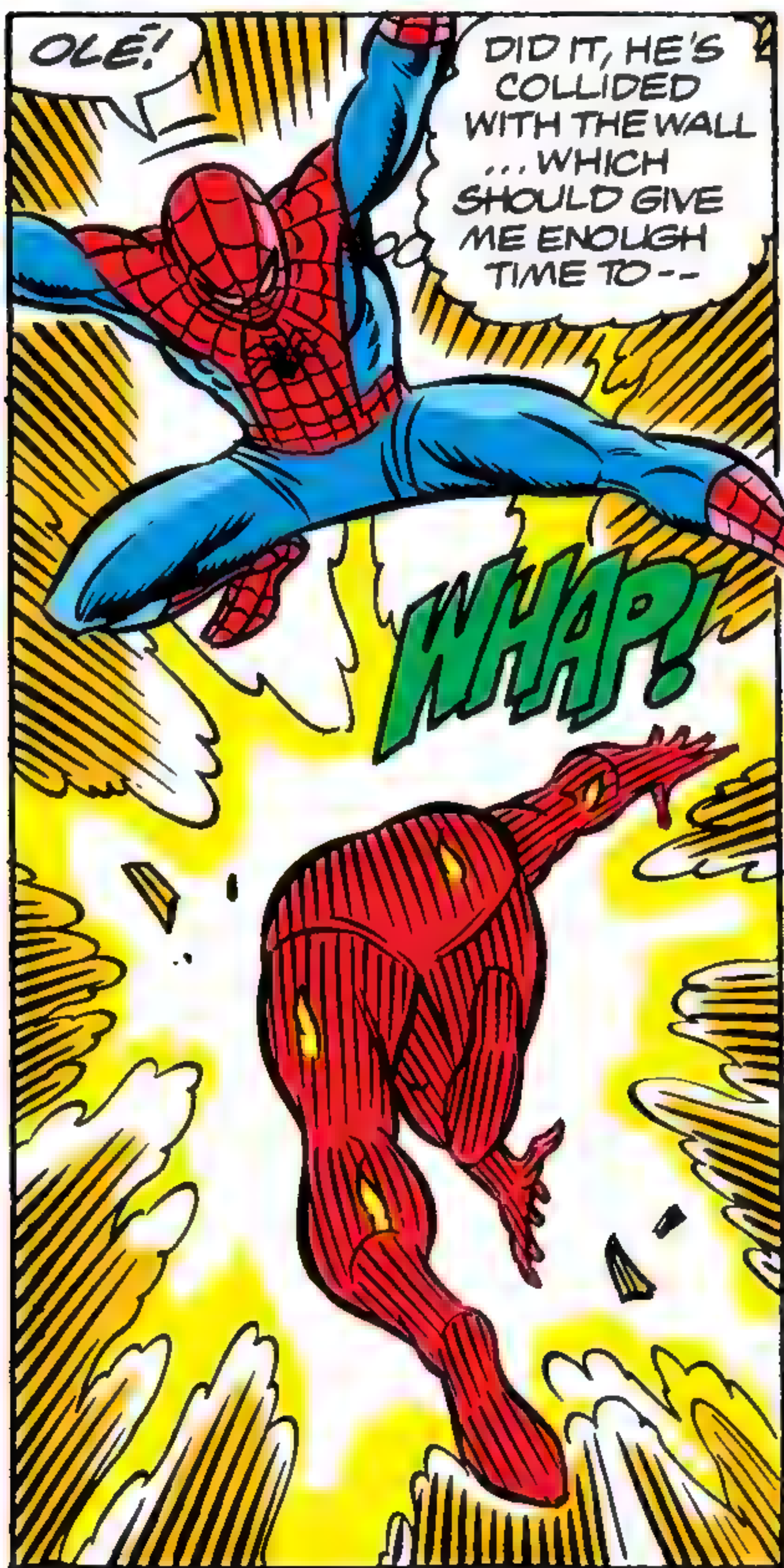
...NOT WHILE I NEED ALL MY SPIDER-REFLEXES JUST TO STAY ALIVE!



I CAN MAKE IT TO THE WINDOW AND OUT, BUT THAT WOULD JUST GIVE TORCHIE MORE MANEUVERING SPACE.



I CAN STILL MOVE, BUT JOHNNY'S AT A DEFINITE DISADVANTAGE!



OLE!

DID IT, HE'S COLLIDED WITH THE WALL ... WHICH SHOULD GIVE ME ENOUGH TIME TO--

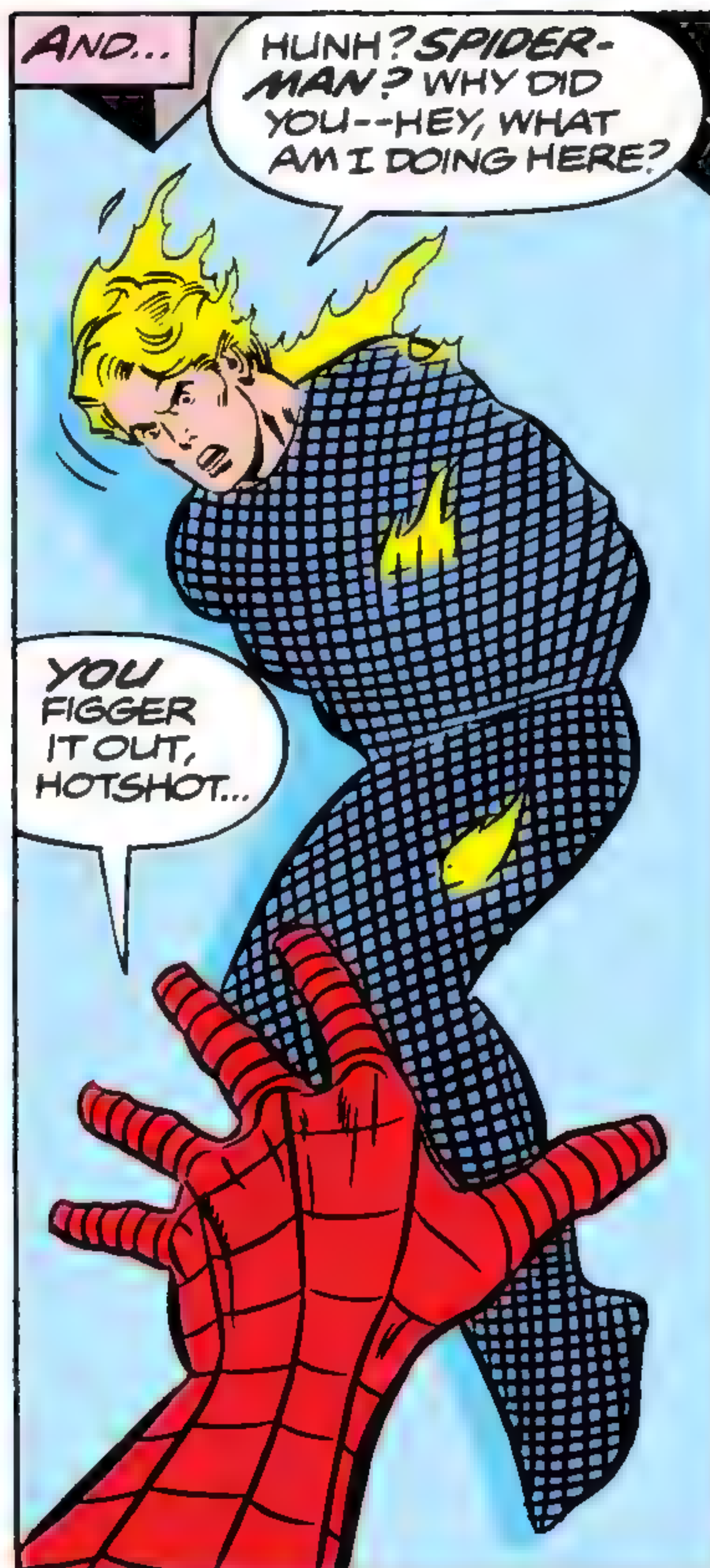
WHAP!



MAN! WHAT'S THAT GUY MADE OUT OF ANYWAY? HE'S ALREADY RECOVERING!

THWIP! THWIP!

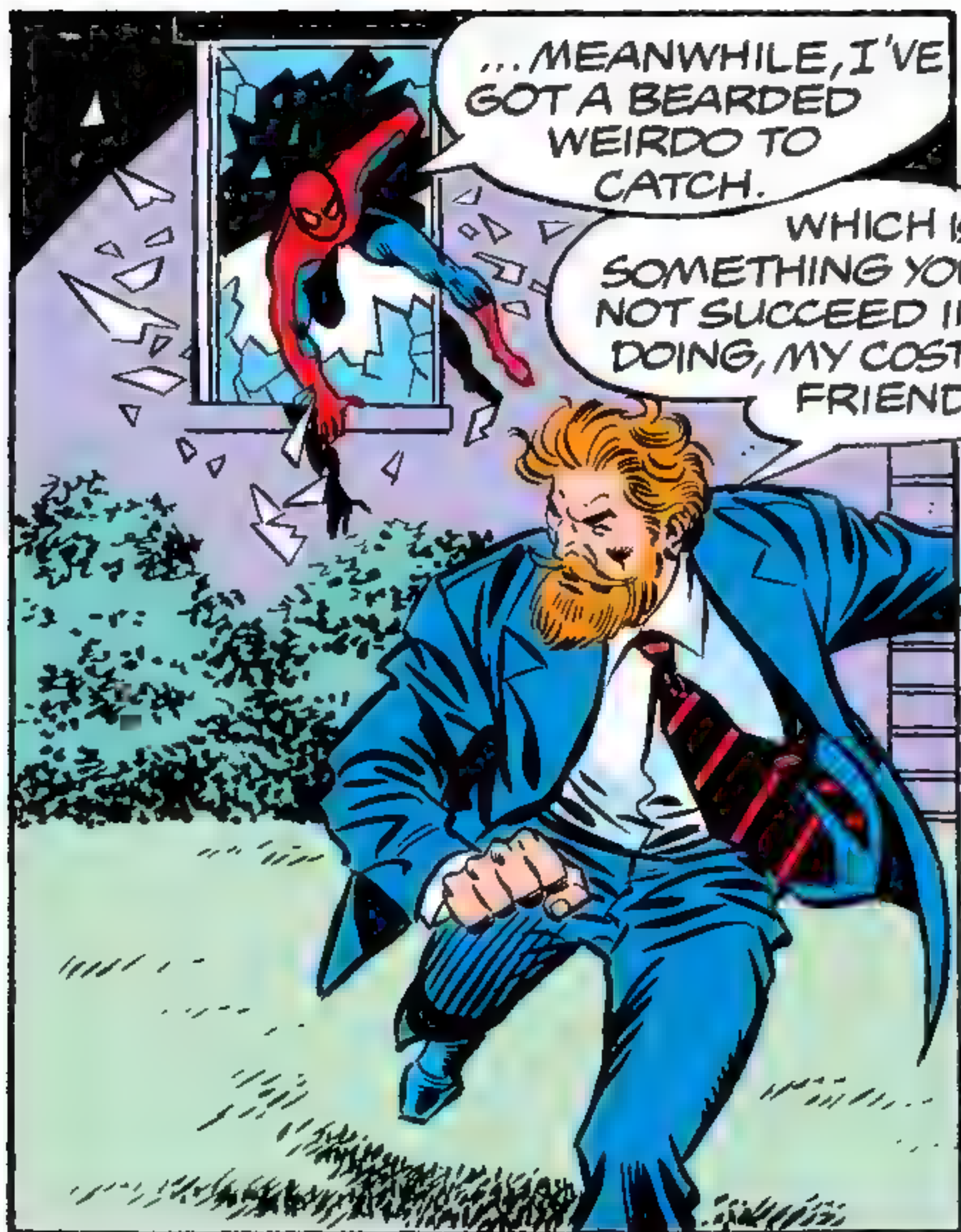
THAT ONLY GIVES ME A FEW SECONDS TO WEB HIM UP AND PRAY THIS NEW FORMULA IS AS FLAME-PROOF AS MY OLD WEBBING.



AND...

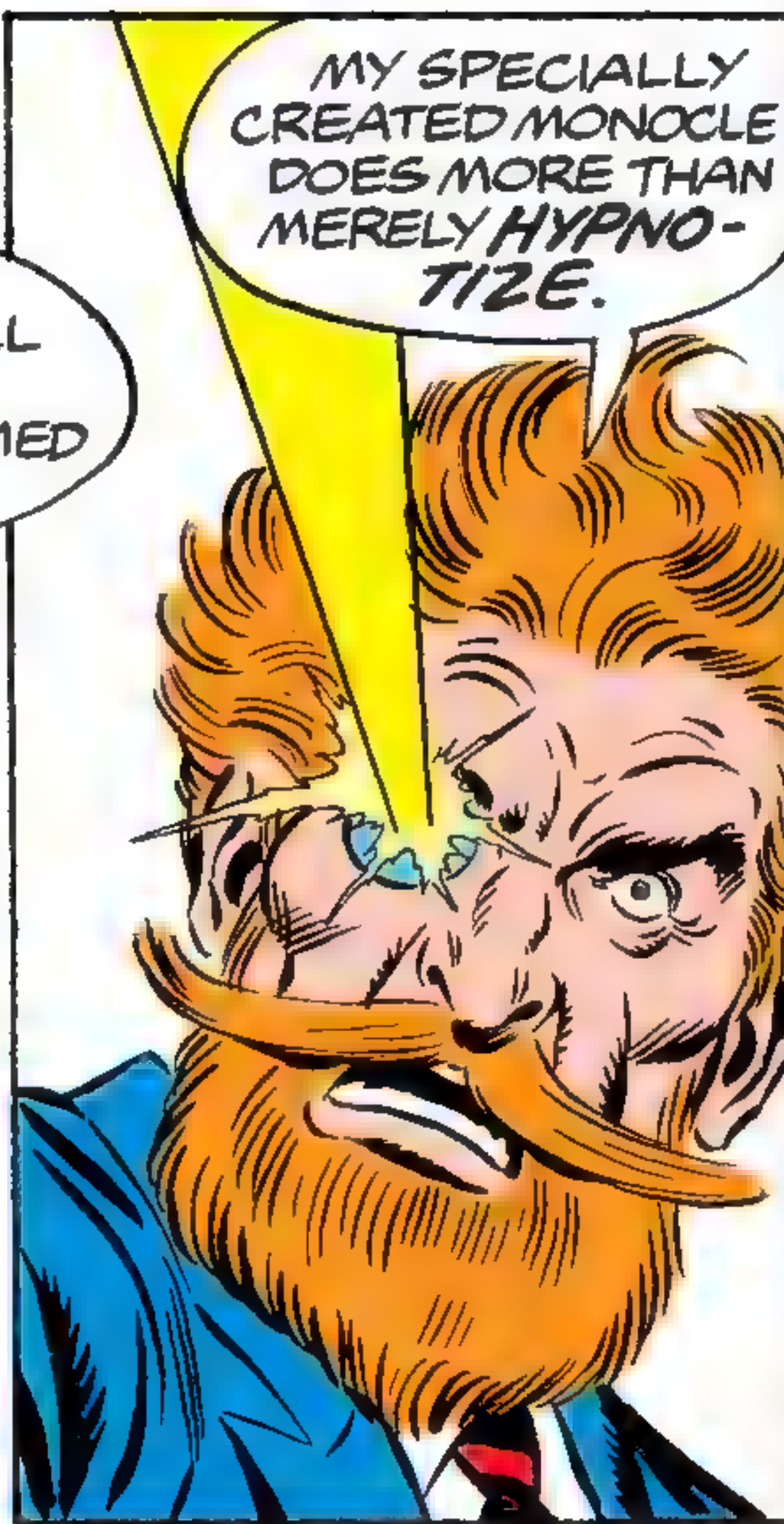
HUNH? SPIDER-MAN? WHY DID YOU--HEY, WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

YOU FIGGER IT OUT, HOTSHOT...



...MEANWHILE, I'VE GOT A BEARDED WEIRDO TO CATCH.

WHICH IS SOMETHING YOU'LL NOT SUCCEED IN DOING, MY COSTUMED FRIEND.

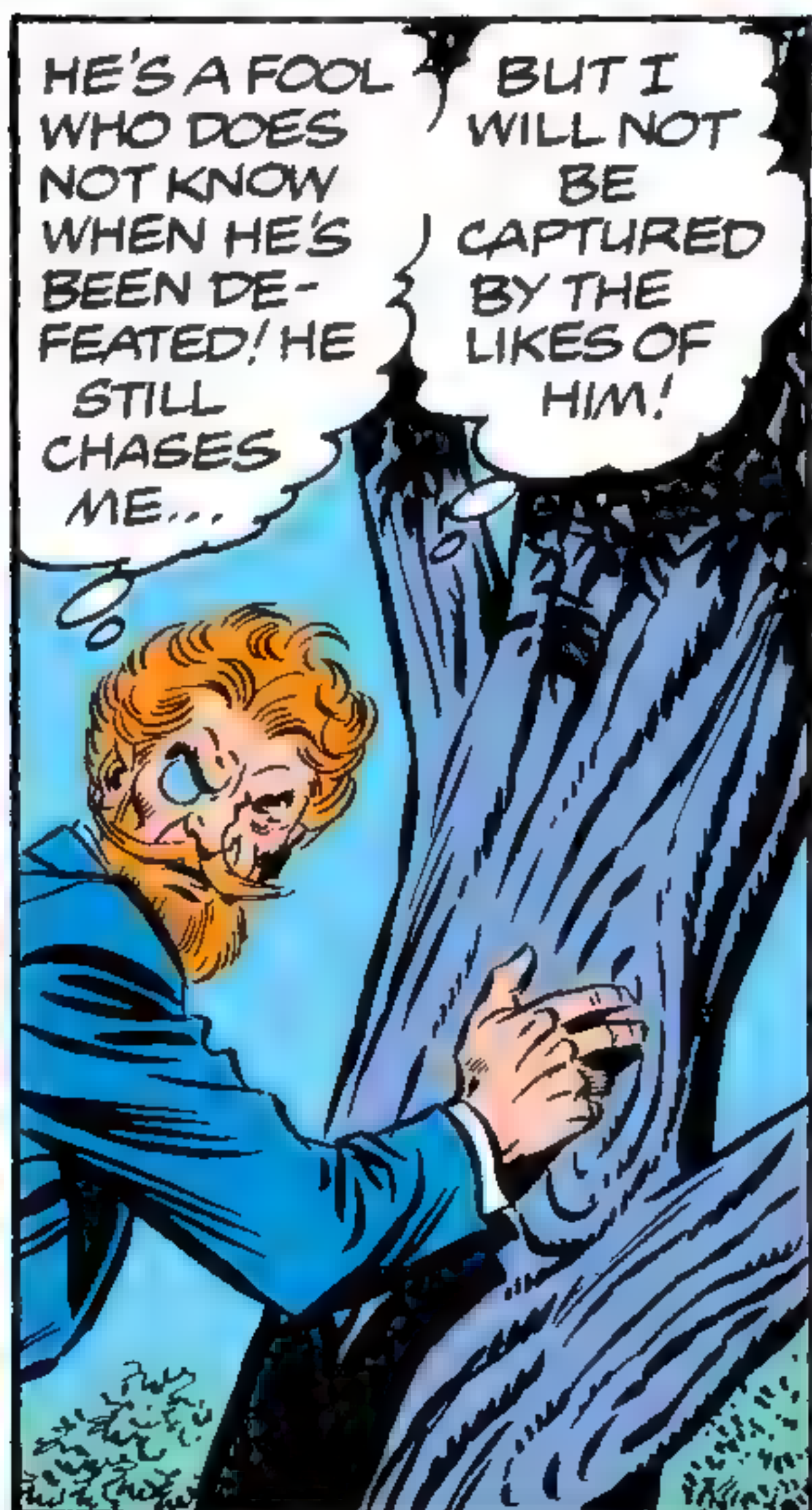


MY SPECIALLY CREATED MONOCLE DOES MORE THAN MERELY HYPNOTIZE.



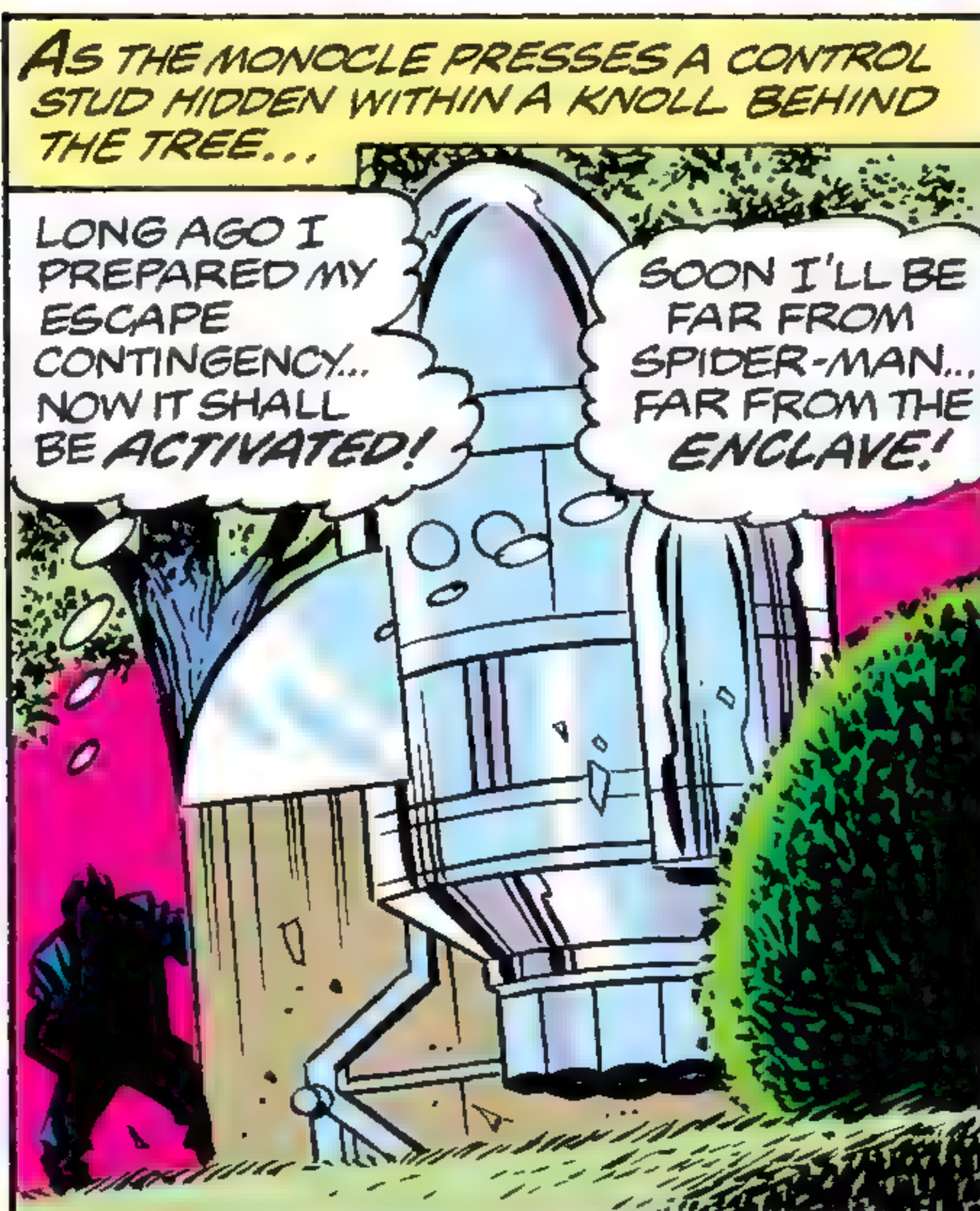
IT CAN DESTROY! NOT BAD, CHUBBY... TELL ME, EVER CONSIDER RENTING YOURSELF OUT FOR KIDS' BIRTHDAY PARTIES?

THAT ACT WOULD KNOCK 'EM DEAD IN SCARSDALE!



HE'S A FOOL WHO DOES NOT KNOW WHEN HE'S BEEN DEFEATED! HE STILL CHASES ME...

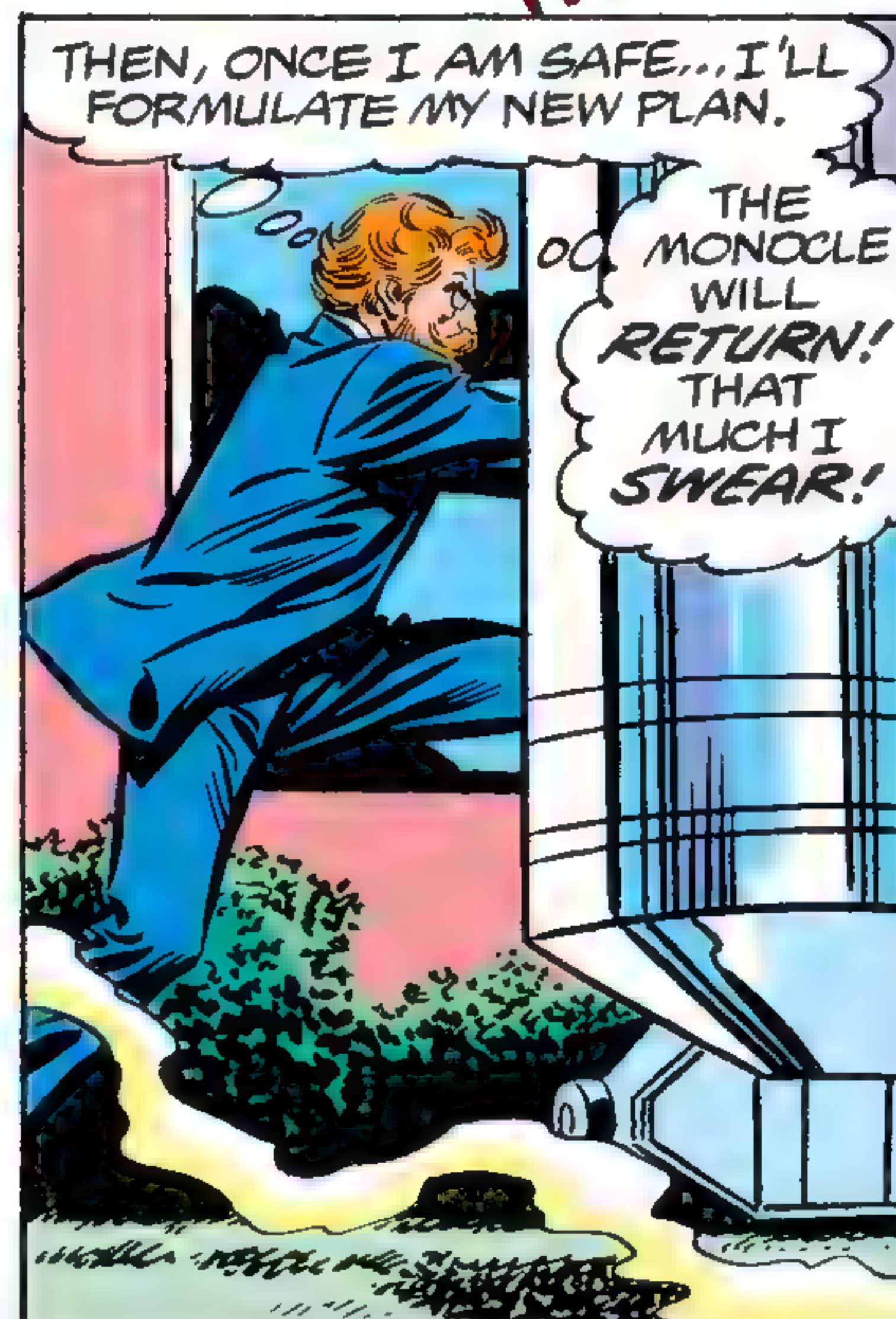
BUT I WILL NOT BE CAPTURED BY THE LIKES OF HIM!



AS THE MONOCLE PASSES A CONTROL STUD HIDDEN WITHIN A KNOLL BEHIND THE TREE...

LONG AGO I PREPARED MY ESCAPE CONTINGENCY... NOW IT SHALL BE ACTIVATED!

SOON I'LL BE FAR FROM SPIDER-MAN... FAR FROM THE ENCLAVE!



THEN, ONCE I AM SAFE... I'LL FORMULATE MY NEW PLAN.

THE MONOCLE WILL RETURN! THAT MUCH I SWEAR!



UNLESS I CAN SUDDENLY SPROUT WINGS AND FLY-- HE'S GONE!

WRONG, WEBHEAD.

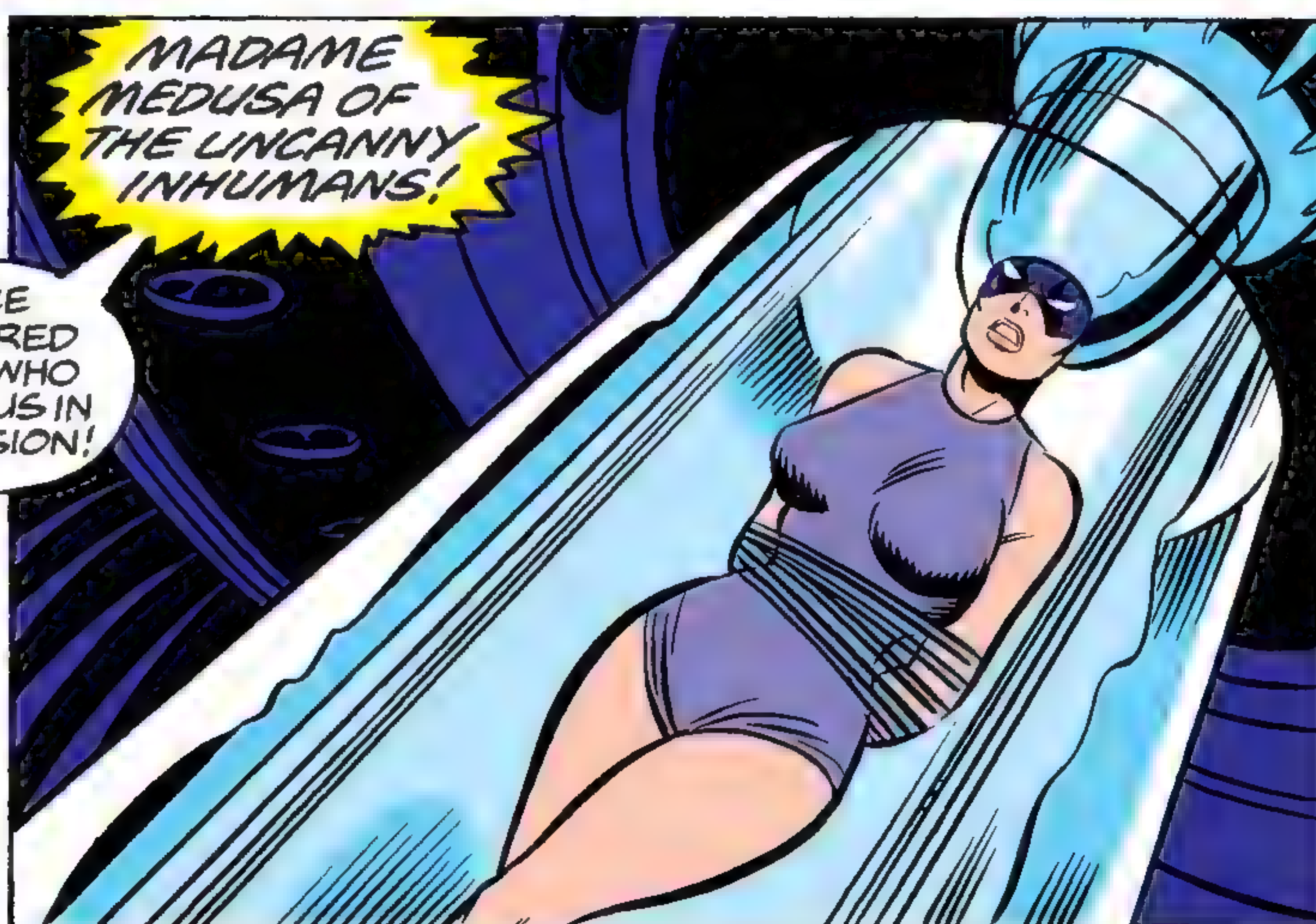
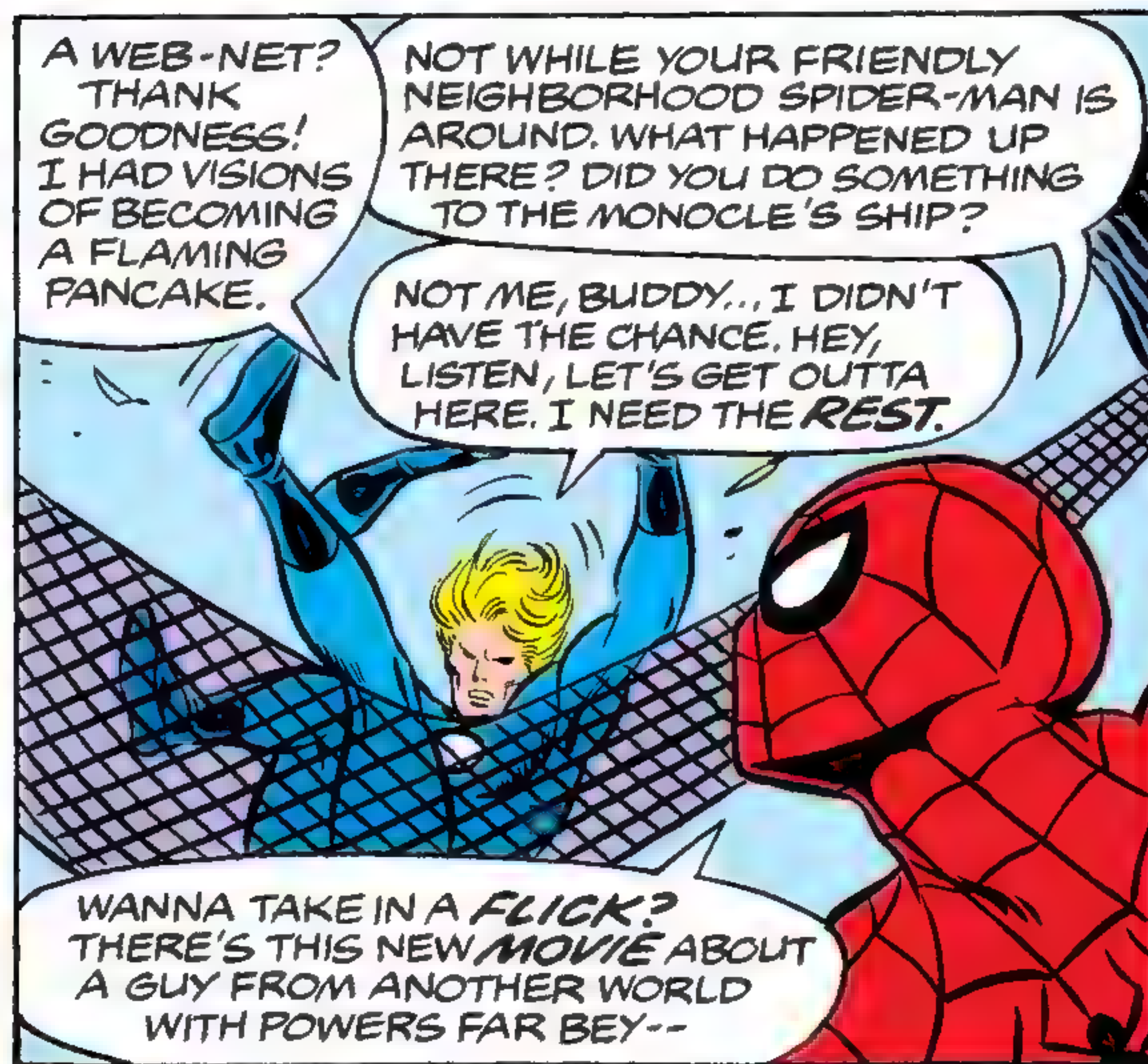
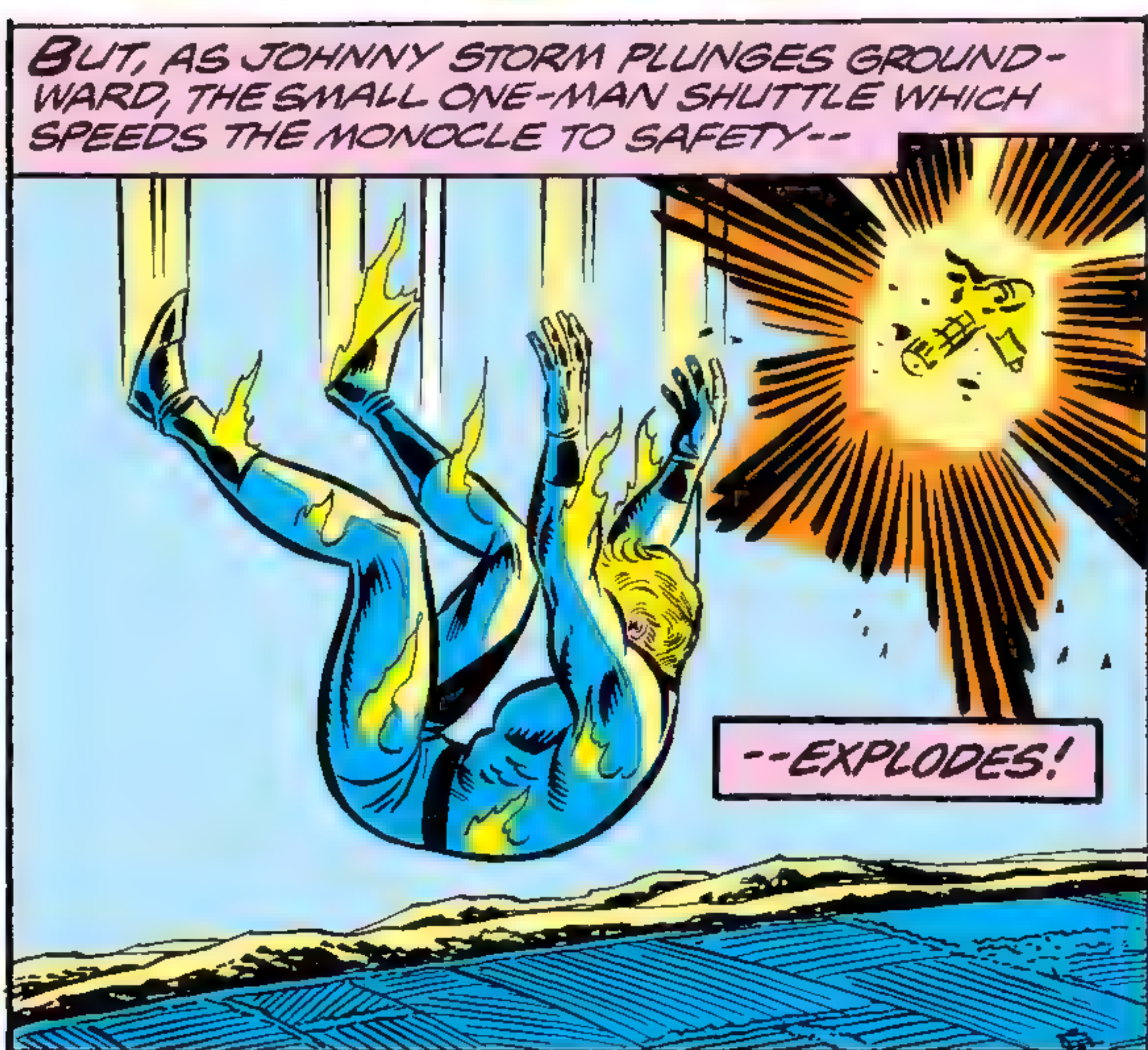
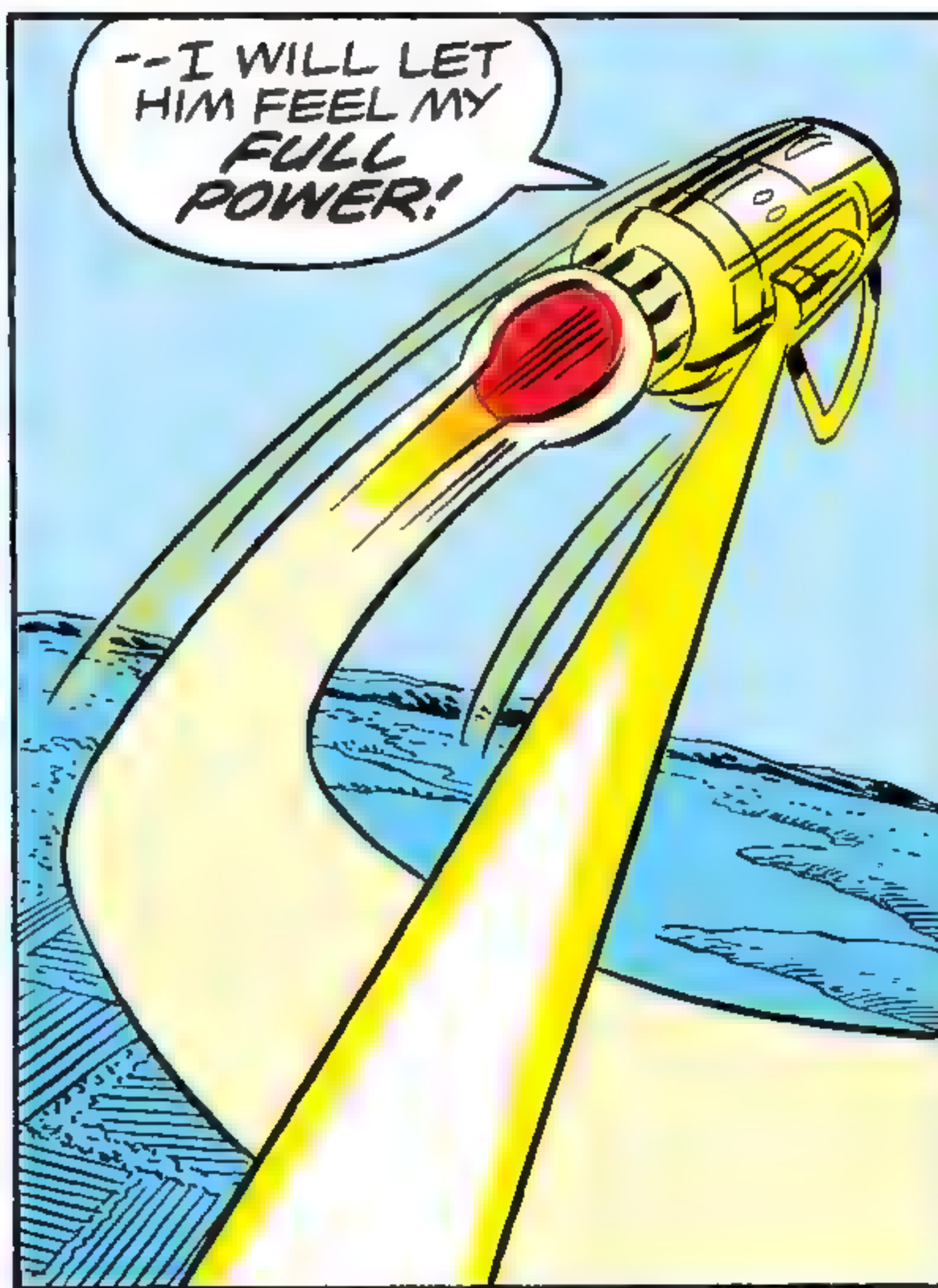
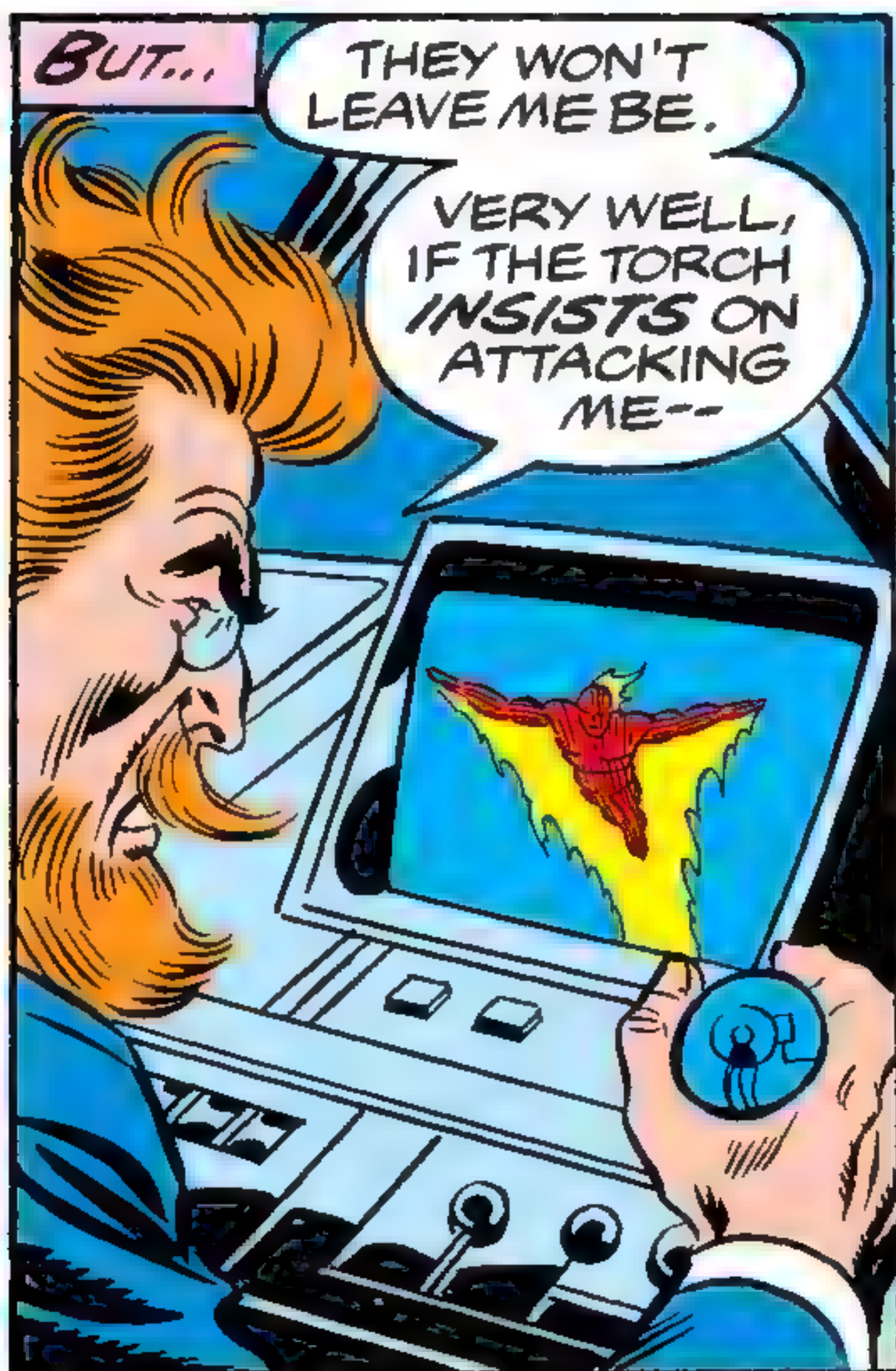


MAYBE YOU CAN'T STOP THE MONOCLE-- BUT I CAN!

TORCH? HOW DID YOU FREE YOURSELF? YOU WERE WEBBED UP...

I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT SOME DAY...

...WHEN WE BOTH HAVE A SPARE MINUTE BETWEEN ADVENTURES!



MEANWHILE... IN DISTANT SPACE, REED, SUE AND BEN FACE THEIR MOST DEADLY CRISIS YET...

THE POWER OF THE SPHINX

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FANTASTIC FOUR



Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**®

THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE REUNITED AGAINST...

THE POWER OF THE SPHINX!

IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN (OR, MORE LIKELY, BEEN SPENDING THE PAST TWO MONTHS VISITING VENUS): TWO ISSUES AGO WE SAW REED, BEN AND SUE SENTENCED BY THE SKRULL HIGH COURT TO DEATH BY RAPID AGING! IN SHORT, THE F.F. HAVE THREE DAYS TO LIVE, BEFORE THEY PERISH OF OLD AGE!

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, EVEN AFTER THEY EFFECT AN ESCAPE FROM THEIR PRISON IN A SKRULL SPACER, THEY ARE SPOTTED BY A STARSHIP PILOTED BY THE MAN CALLED NOVA, AND HIS ALLIES-- THE NEW CHAMPIONS!

MISTAKING THE F.F. FOR THE SAVAGE SKRULLS WHO HAD JUST ATTACKED THEM, NOVA AND COMPANY OPEN FIRE ON THE FLEEING FANTASTIC FOUR...

YAHOOO! WE DID IT! WE GOT THOSE KILLER SKRULLS!

THEY'LL NEVER ATTACK ANYONE ELSE AGAIN!

MARV WOLFMAN
WRITER/EDITOR

SAL BUSCEMA & D. HANDS
ARTISTS

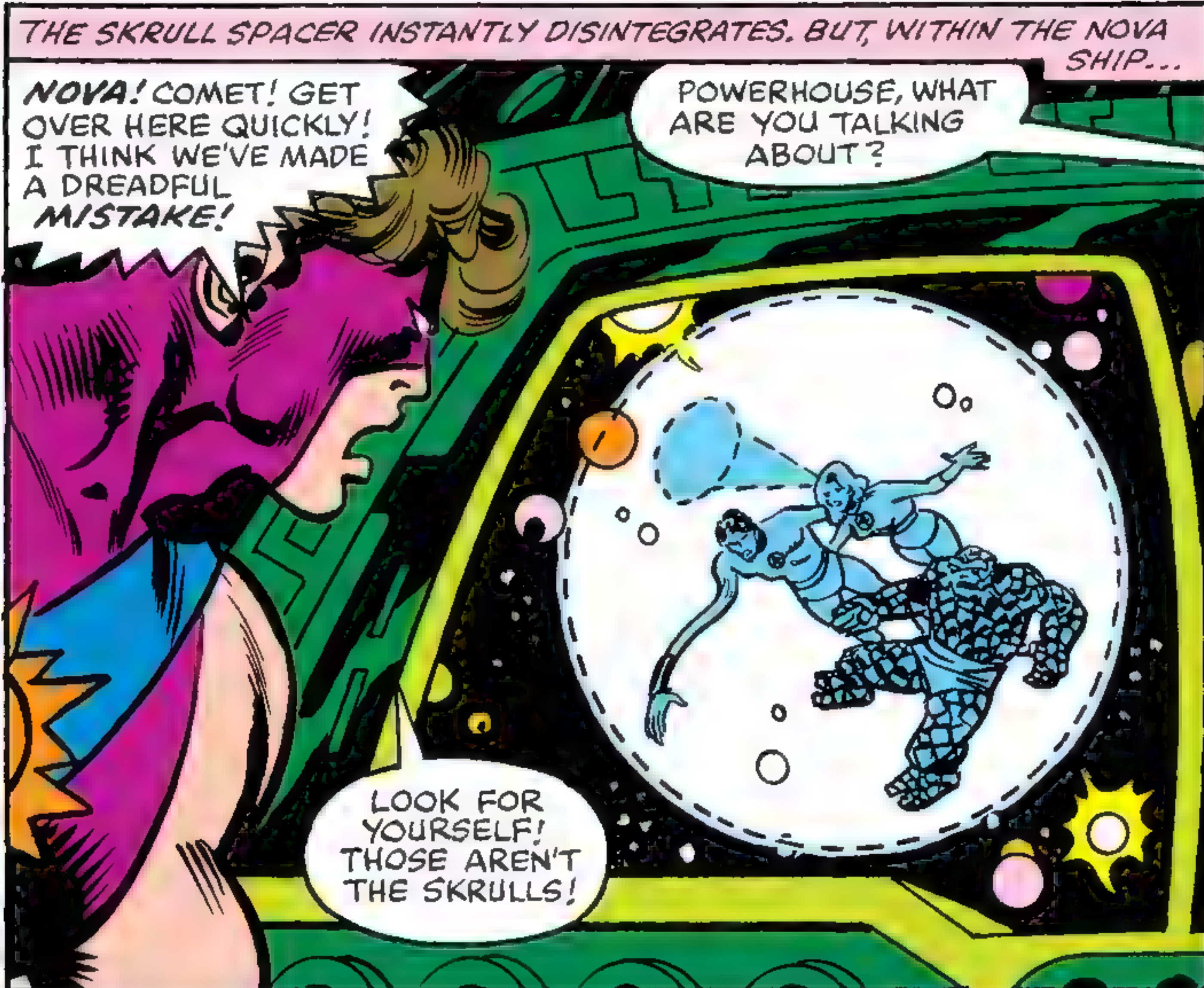
JOE ROSEN
LETTERER

GLYNIS WEIN
COLORIST

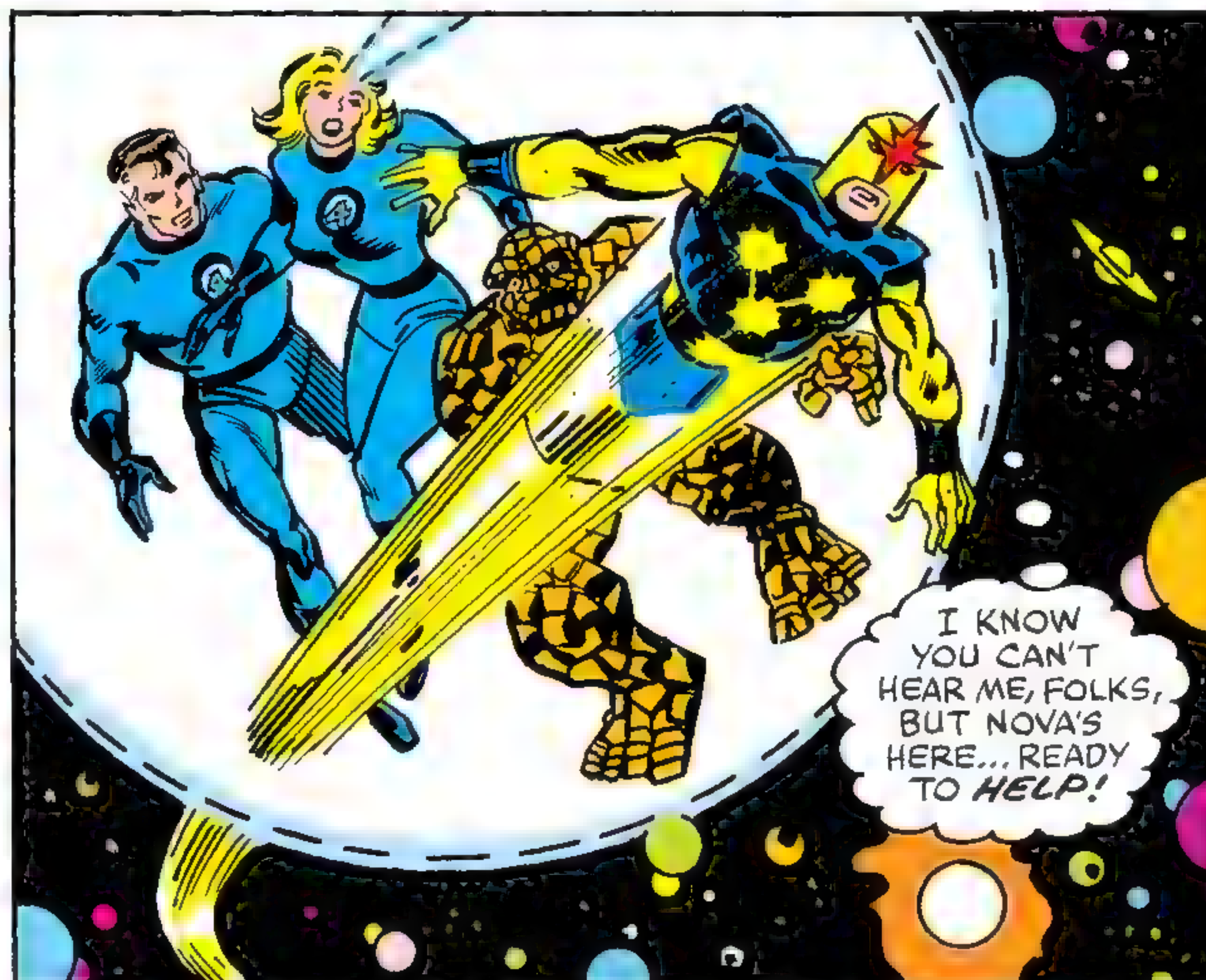
JIM SHOOTER
CONSULTING EDITOR

SO, NOW THE QUESTION IS: IF THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF OUR LATEST SOUL-STAGGERING SAGA, CAN YOU IMAGINE WHERE IT'S GOING?

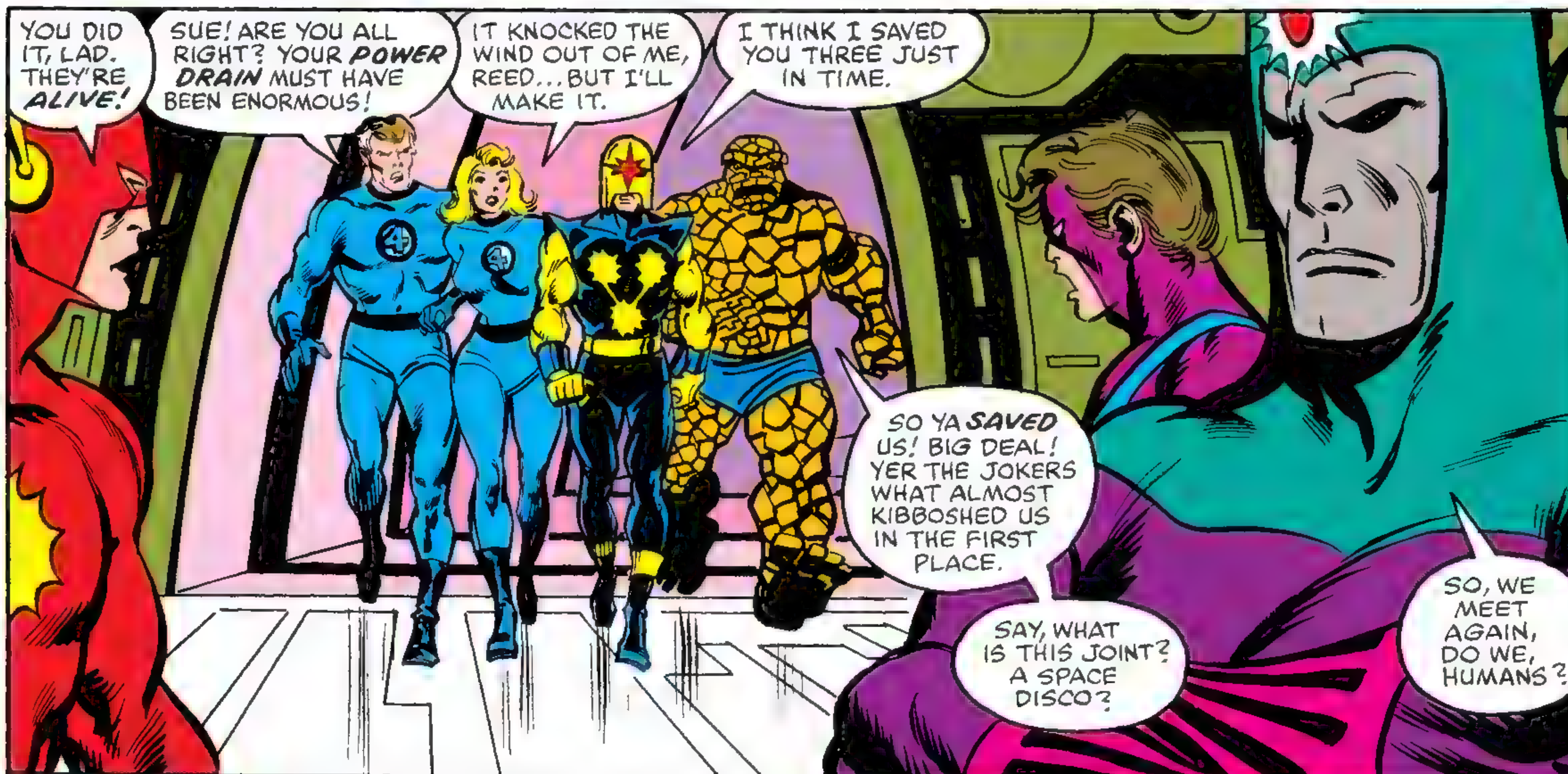
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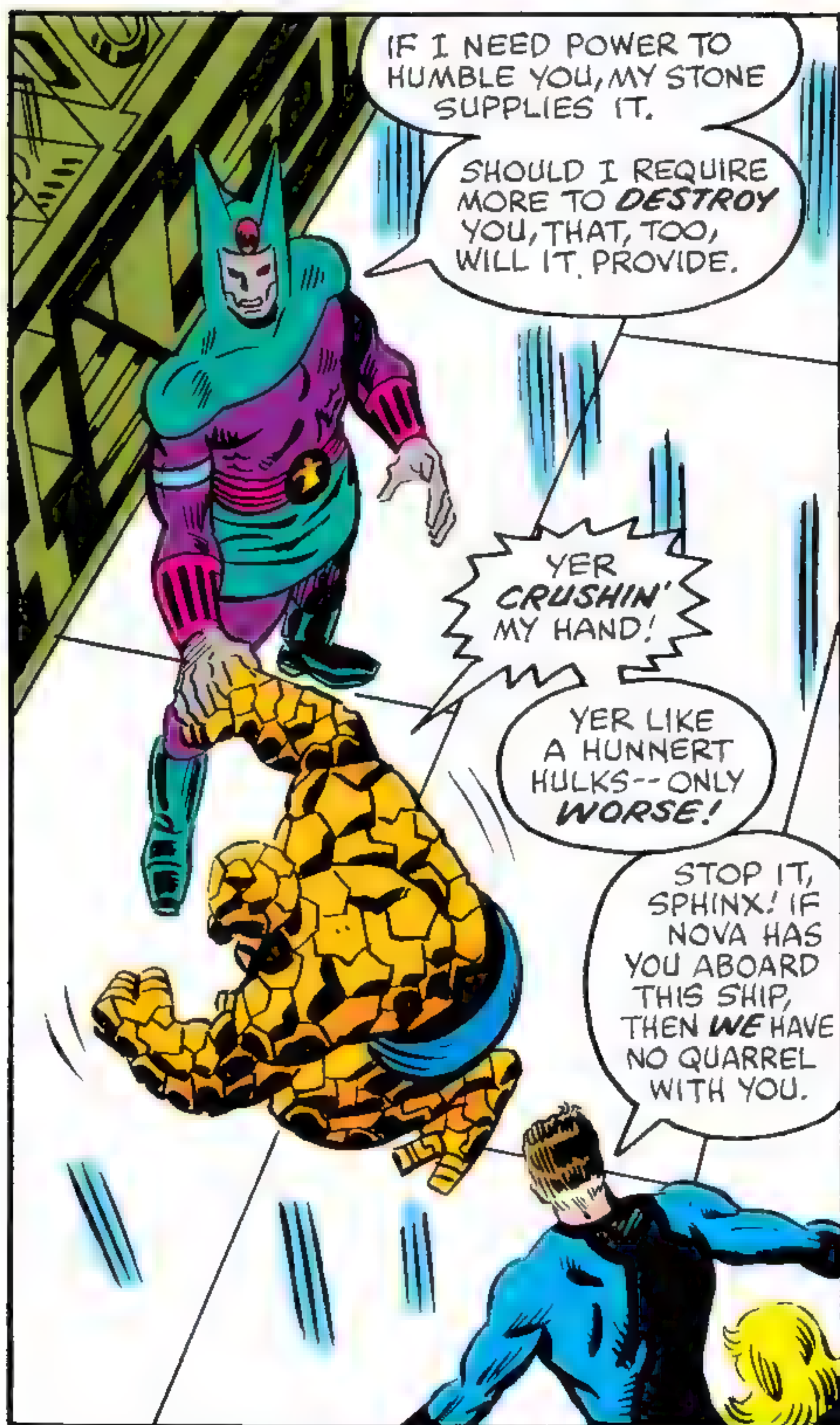
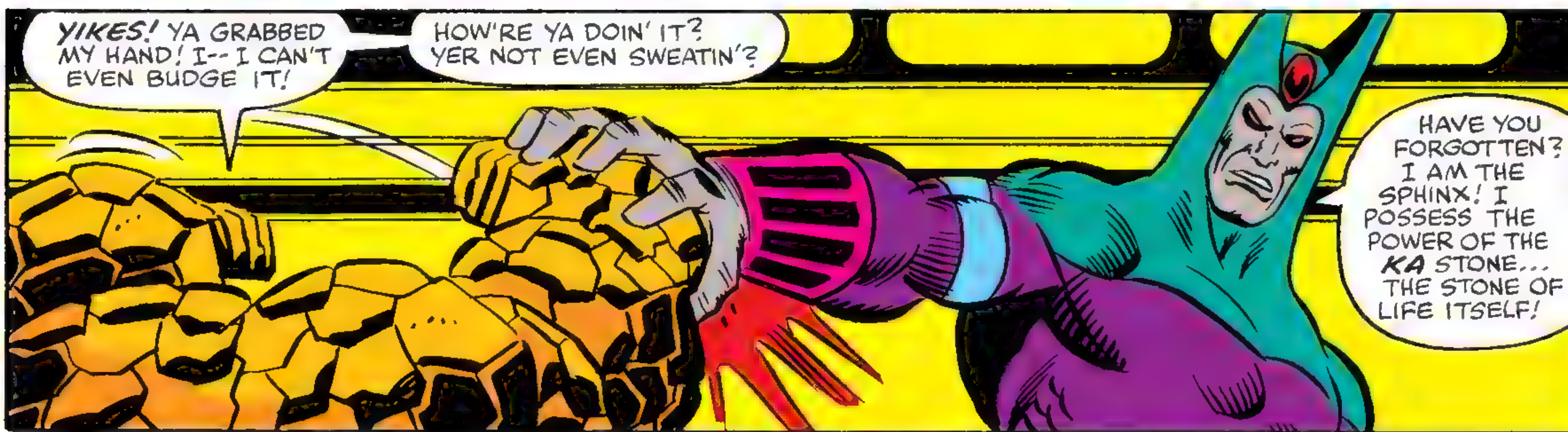
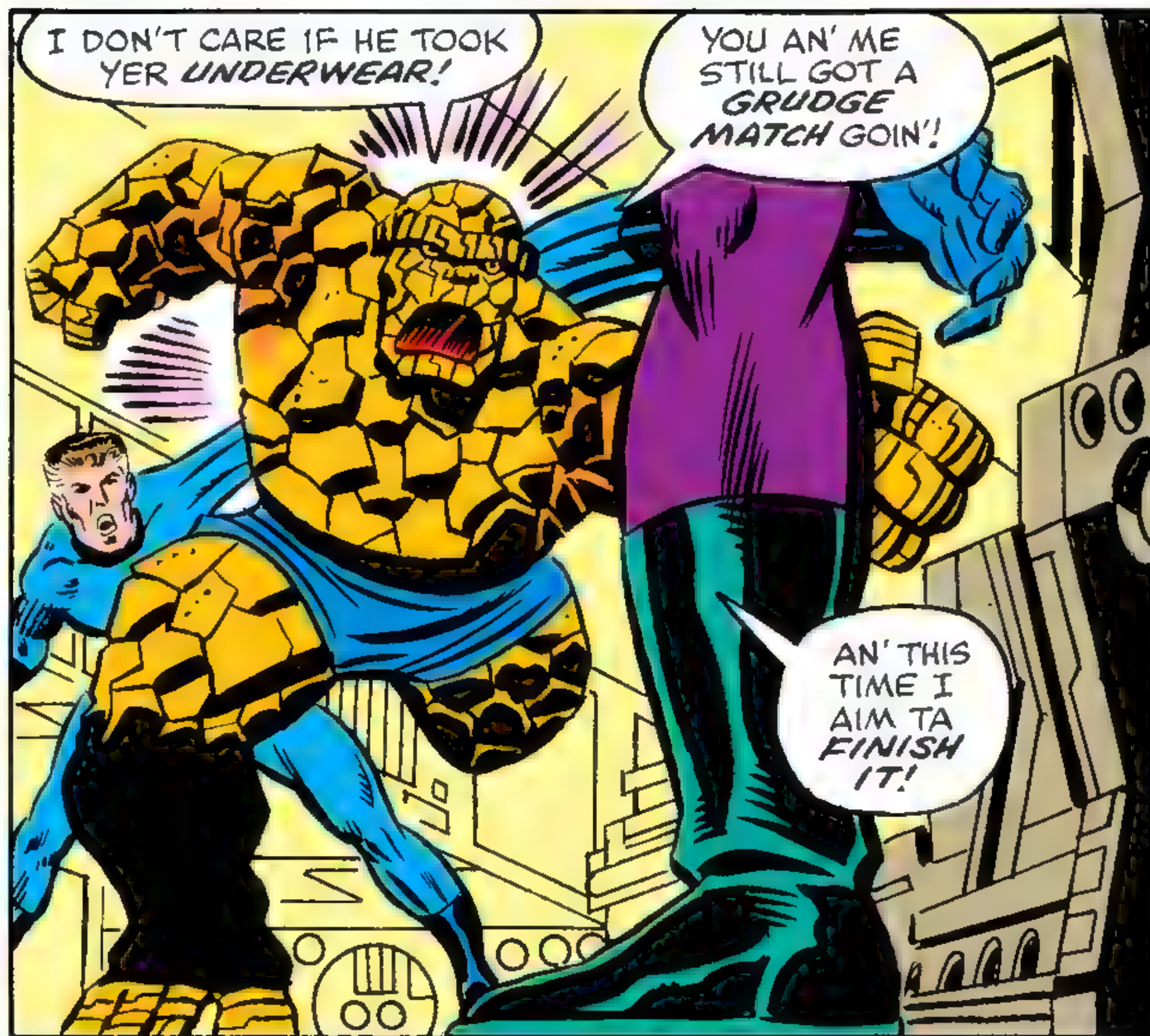


INSTANTLY LAUNCHING HIMSELF INTO ACTION, NOVA'S YOUTHFUL FEATURES TAKE ON A GRIM AND DETERMINED CAST AS HE FLASHES ACROSS THE VOID OF SPACE.

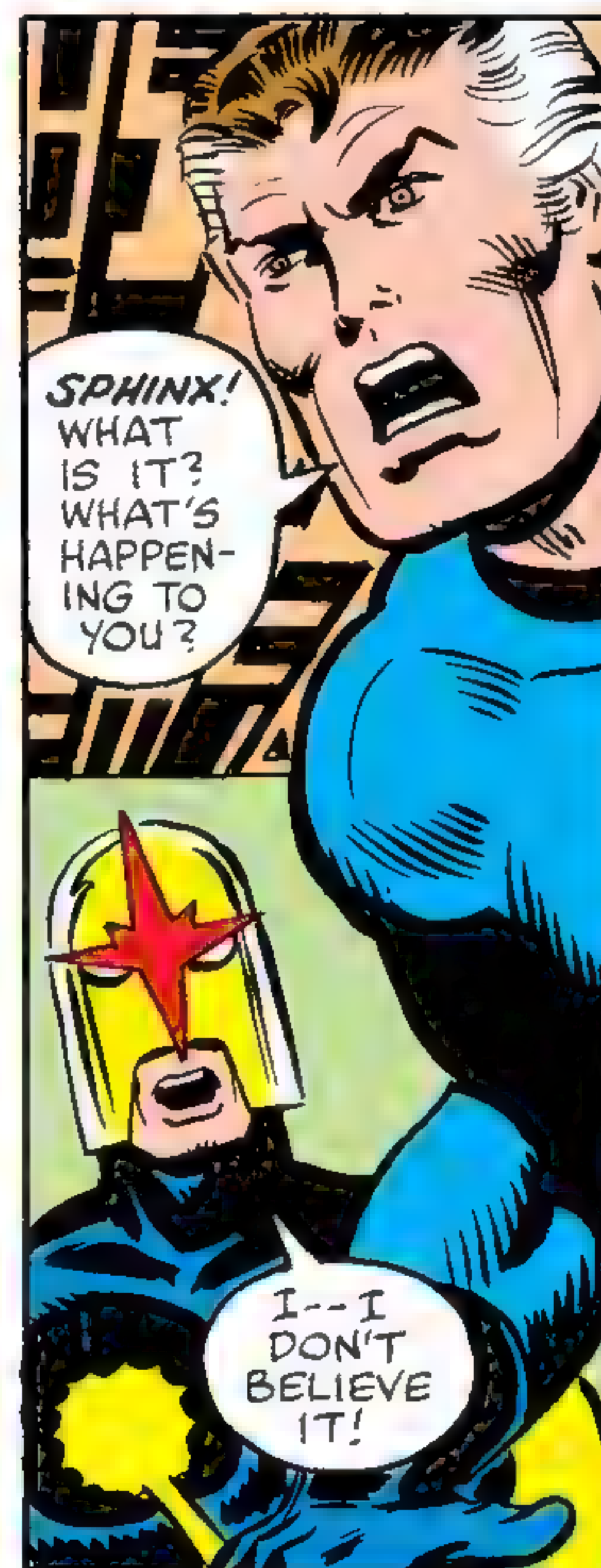


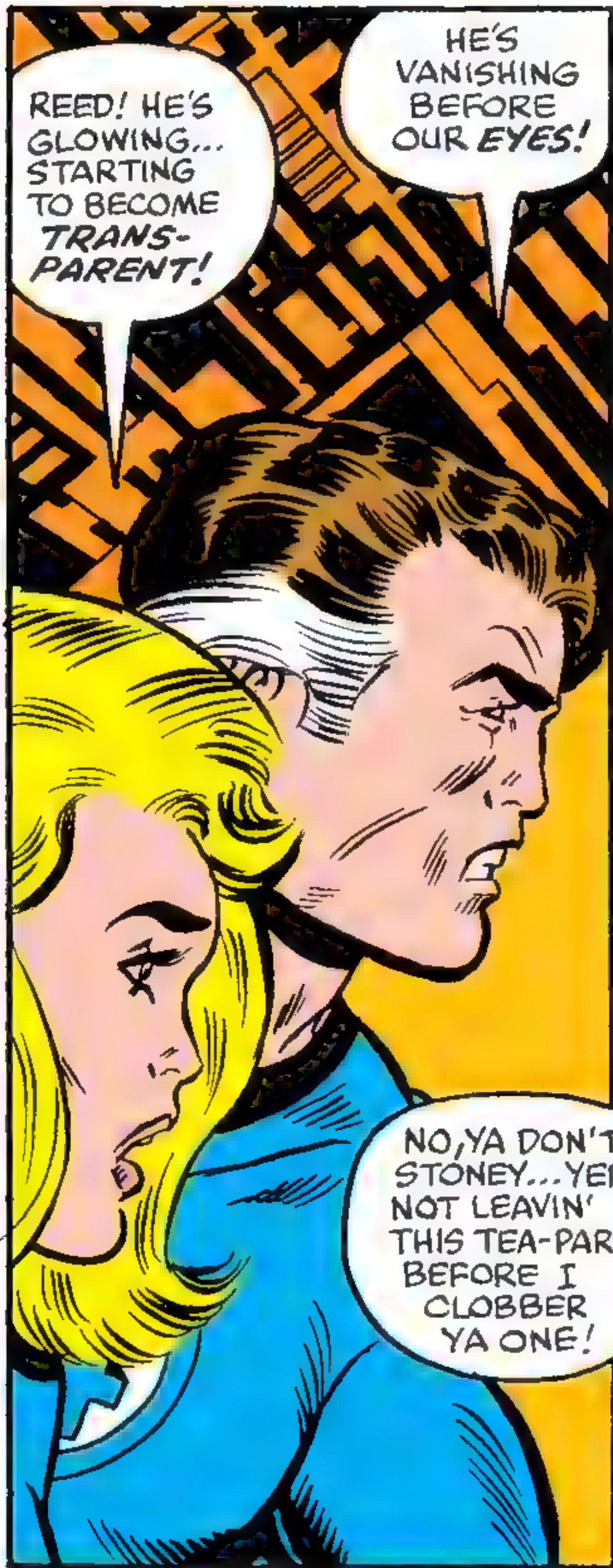
A FEW MOMENTS LATER, A SOMEWHAT BEDRAGGLED THREESOME JOIN NOVA ABOARD HIS MILE-LONG STARSHIP...





SUDDENLY, THE SPHINX'S ATTENTION IS RIVETED ON SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE PRATTLINGS OF DIAMONDHEAD, A FACT THAT DOES NOT ESCAPE THE NOTICE OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S STUDIOUS LEADER...





REED! HE'S GLOWING... STARTING TO BECOME **TRANSPARENT!**

HE'S VANISHING BEFORE OUR EYES!

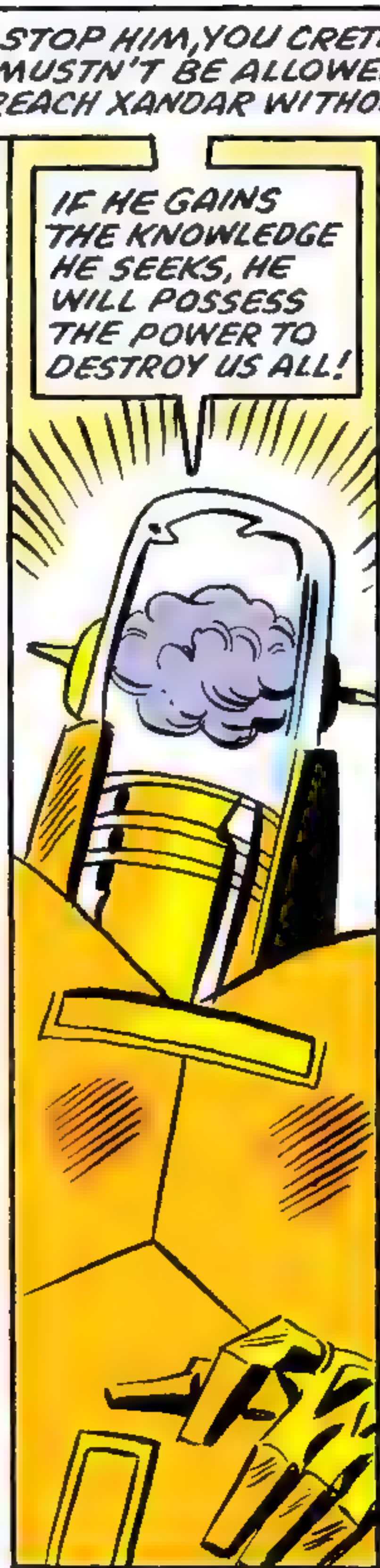
NO, YA DON'T, STONEY... YER NOT LEAVIN' THIS TEA-PARTY BEFORE I CLOBBER YA ONE!



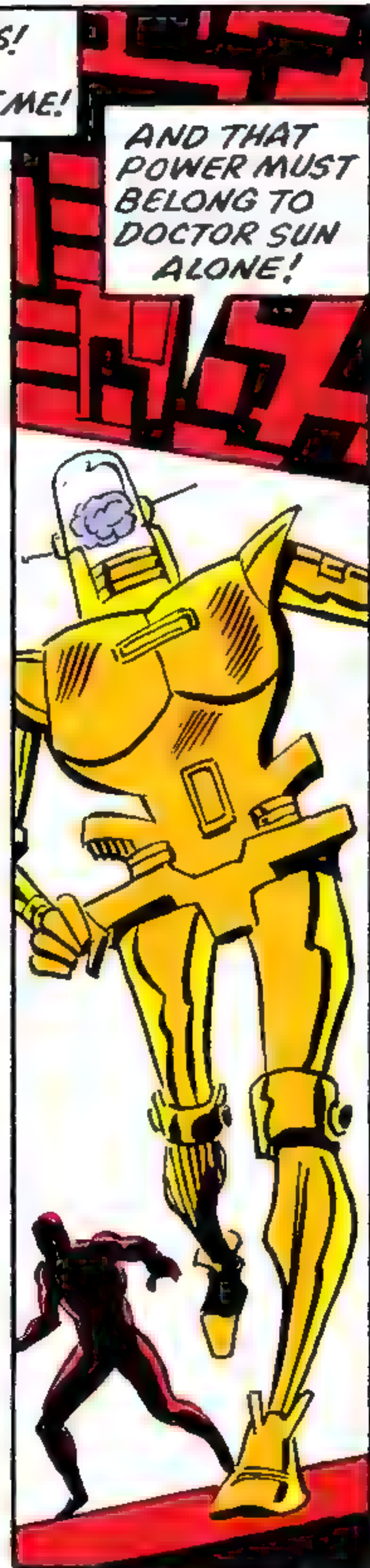
BACK, YOU SNIVELLING INSECTS-- **AWAY FROM ME!**

I SENSE THE **LIVING COMPUTERS** OF XANDAR!

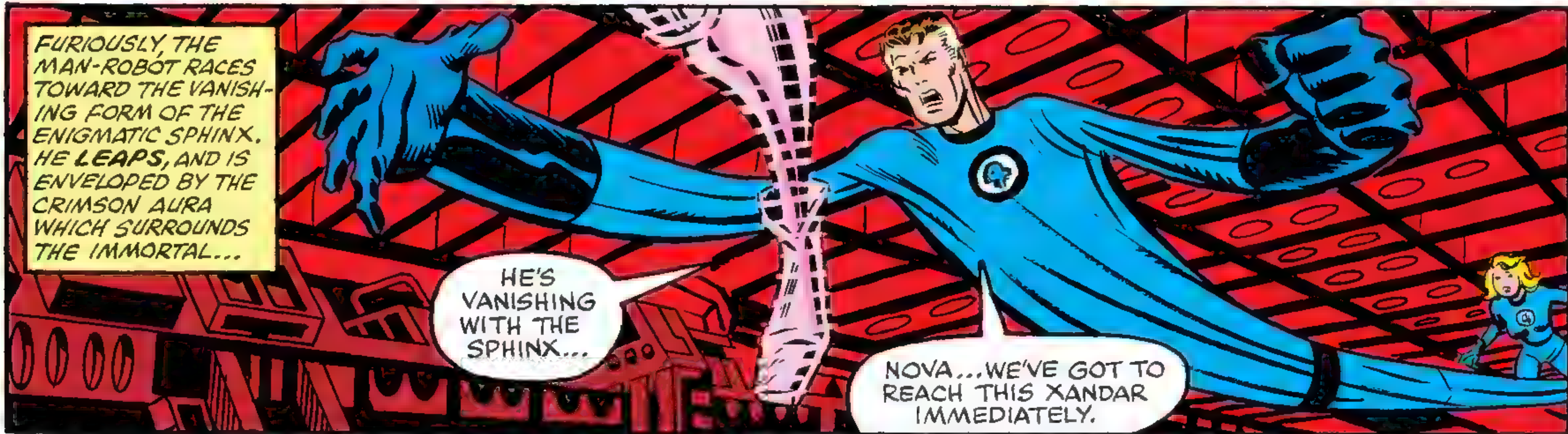
I CAN **FEEL IT...** THE END OF MY **MILLENNIUM-LONG QUEST** IS WITHIN MY GRASP!



IF HE GAINS THE **KNOWLEDGE** HE SEEKS, HE WILL POSSESS THE **POWER** TO DESTROY US ALL!



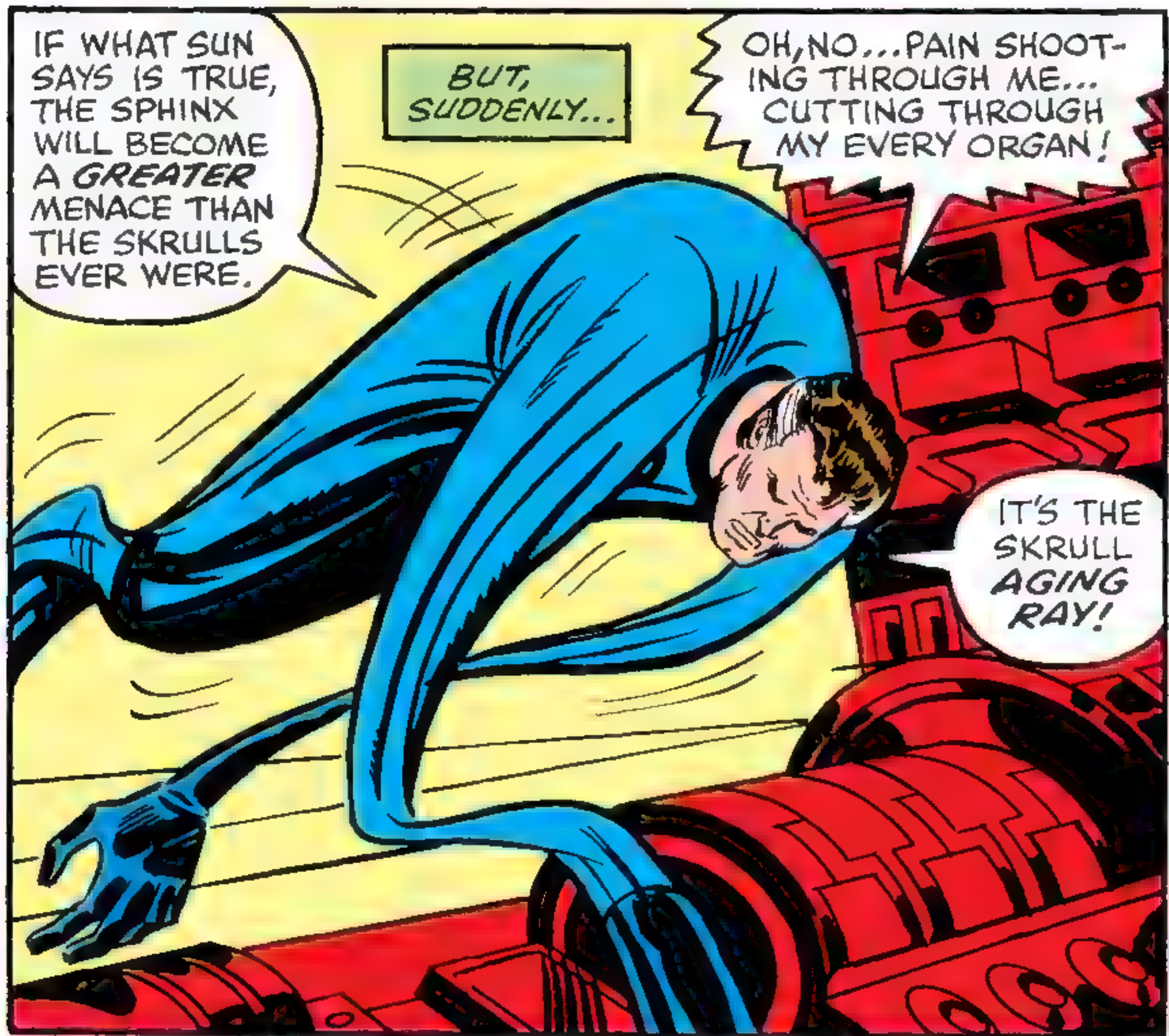
AND THAT **POWER** MUST BELONG TO **DOCTOR SUN ALONE!**



FURIOUSLY, THE MAN-ROBOT RACES TOWARD THE VANISHING FORM OF THE ENIGMATIC SPHINX. HE LEAPS, AND IS ENVELOPED BY THE CRIMSON AURA WHICH SURROUNDS THE IMMORTAL...

HE'S VANISHING WITH THE SPHINX...

NOVA... WE'VE GOT TO REACH THIS XANDAR IMMEDIATELY.



IF WHAT SUN SAYS IS TRUE, THE SPHINX WILL BECOME A **GREATER MENACE** THAN THE SKRULLS EVER WERE.

BUT, SUDDENLY...

OH, NO... PAIN SHOOTING THROUGH ME... CUTTING THROUGH MY EVERY ORGAN!

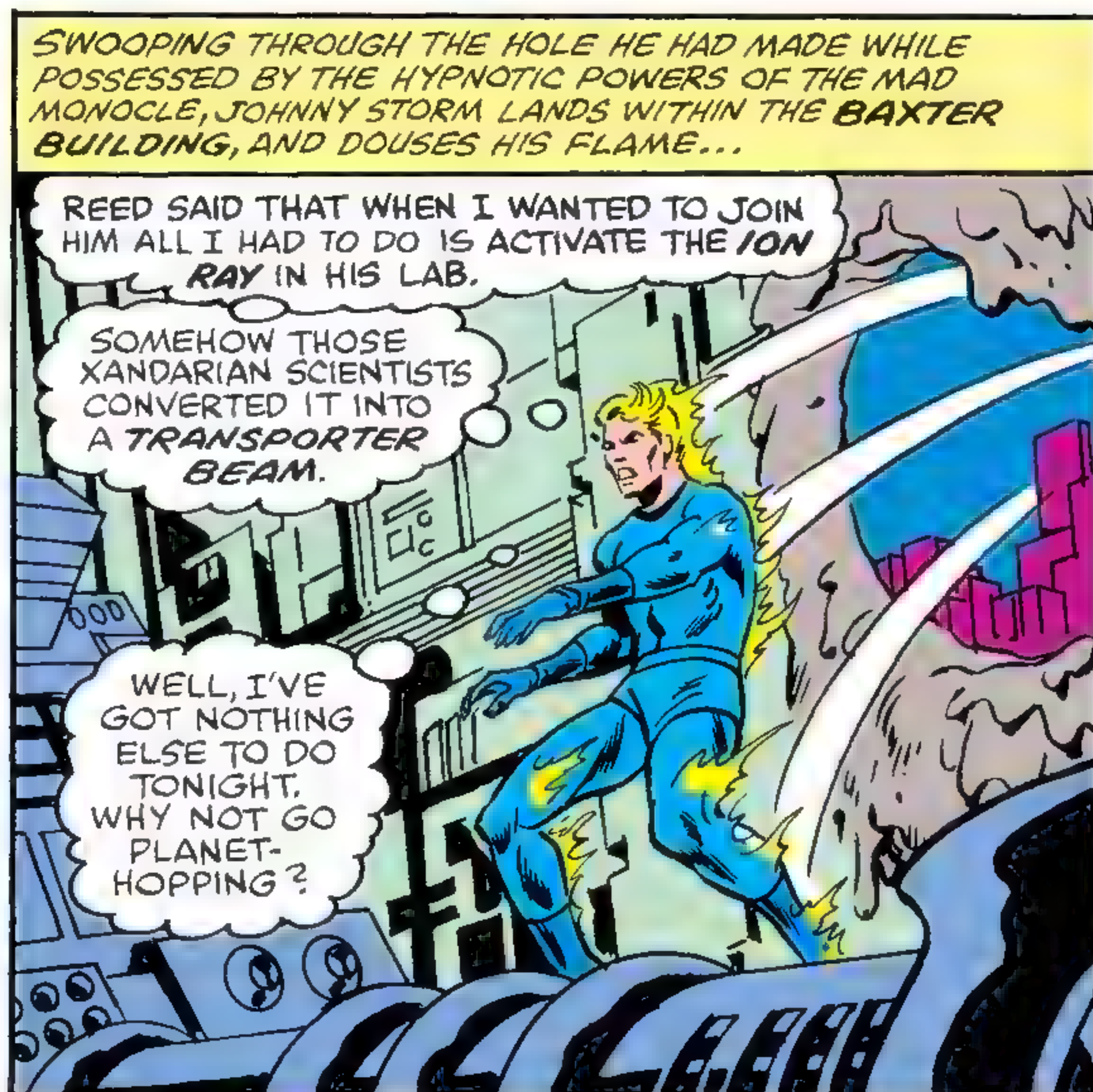
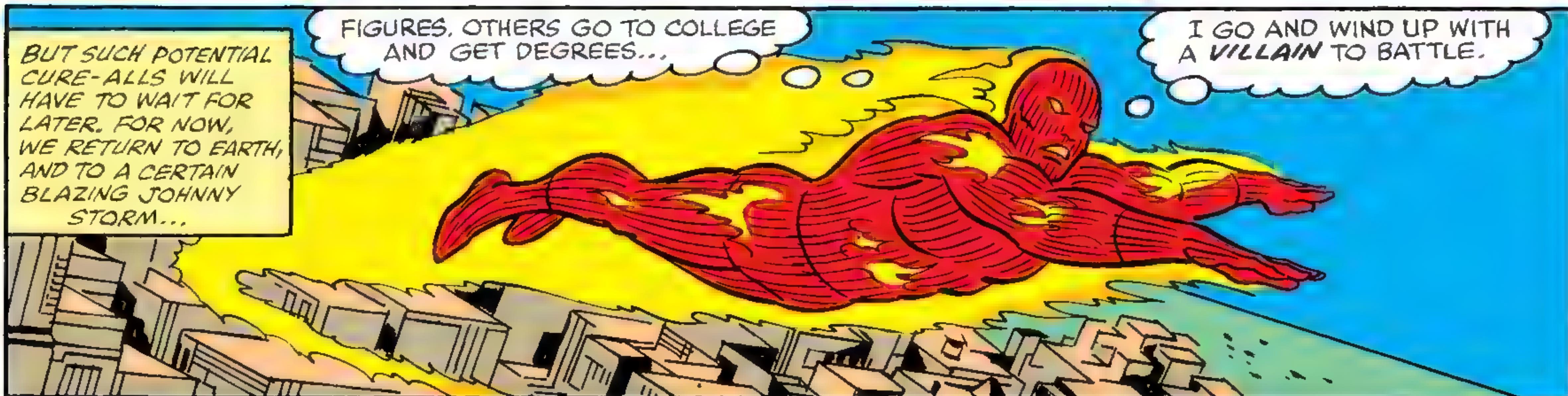
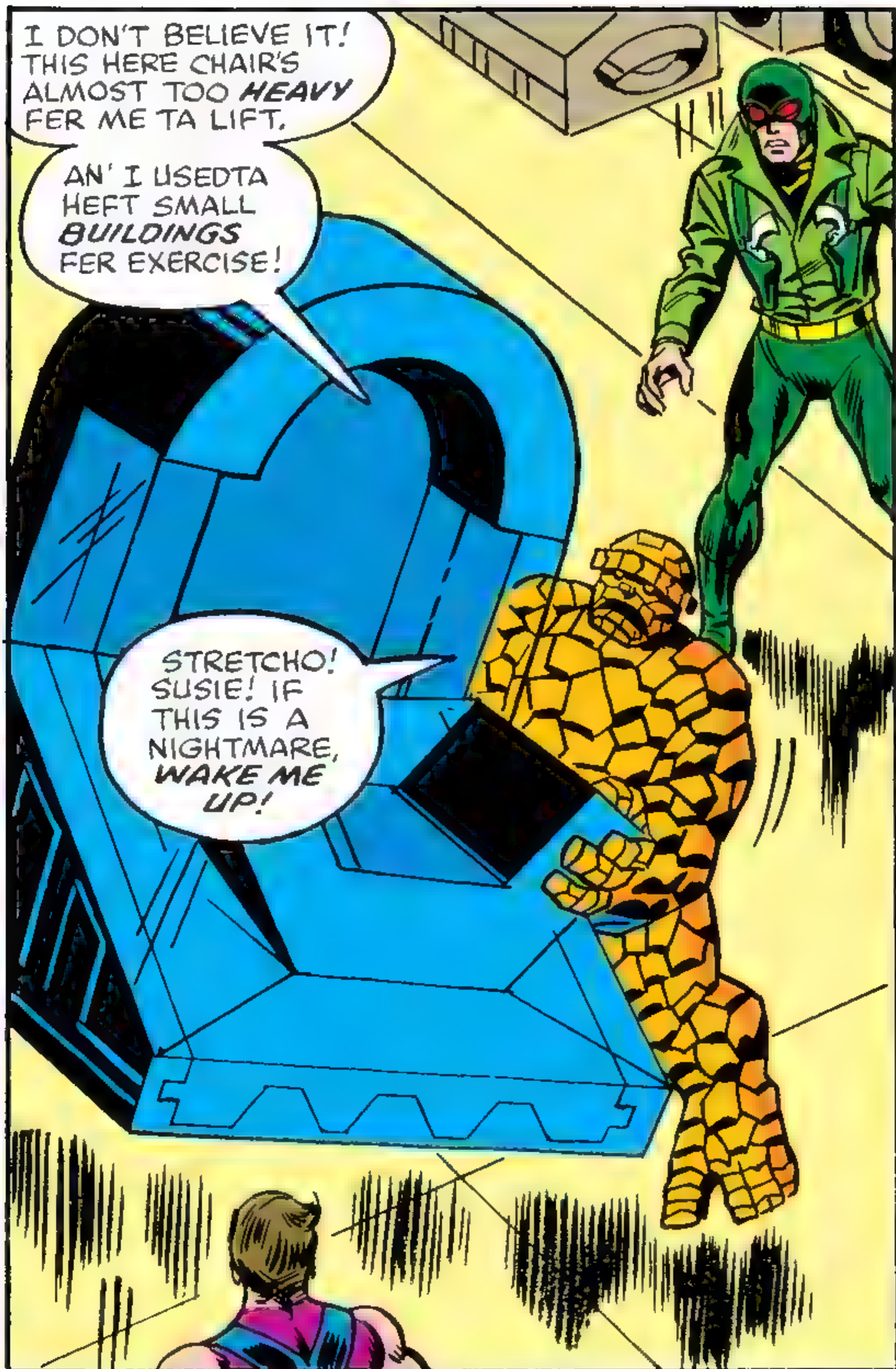
IT'S THE SKRULL AGING RAY!



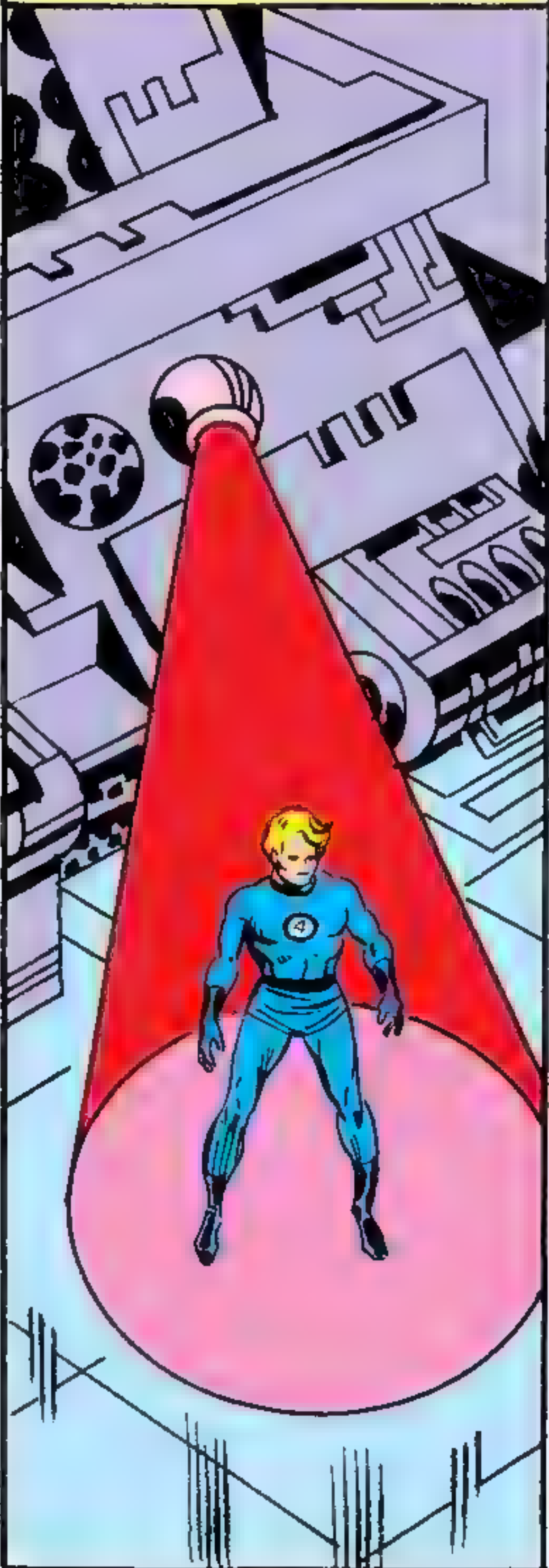
IT'S TAKING EFFECT AT LONG LAST!

REED! I'M TRYING TO USE MY POWERS... BUT IT'S SO VERY HARD!

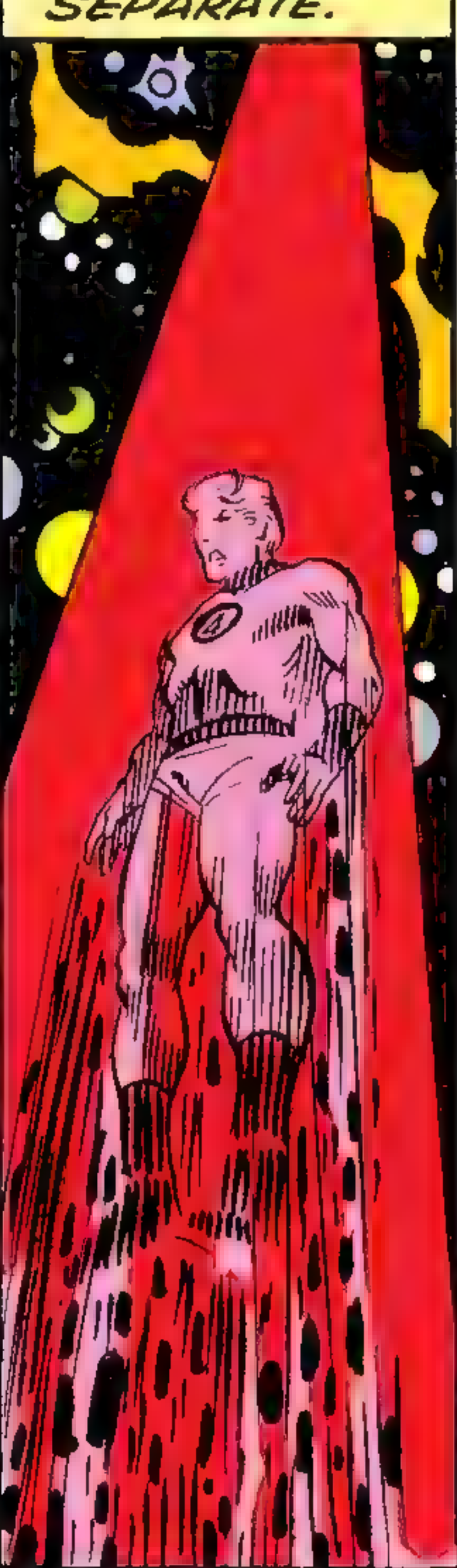
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO US?



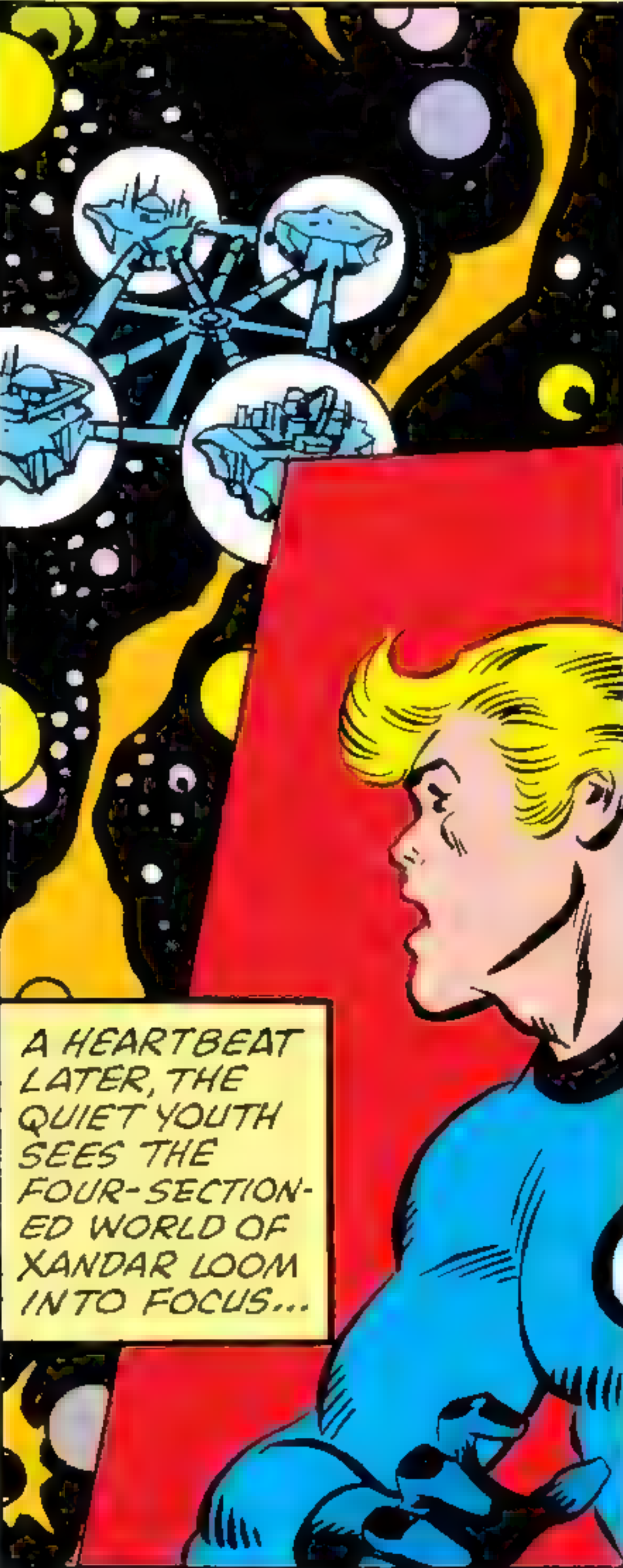
JOHNNY STORM POSITIONS HIMSELF BENEATH THE ION TRANSPORTER RAY, TAKES A DEEP BREATH...



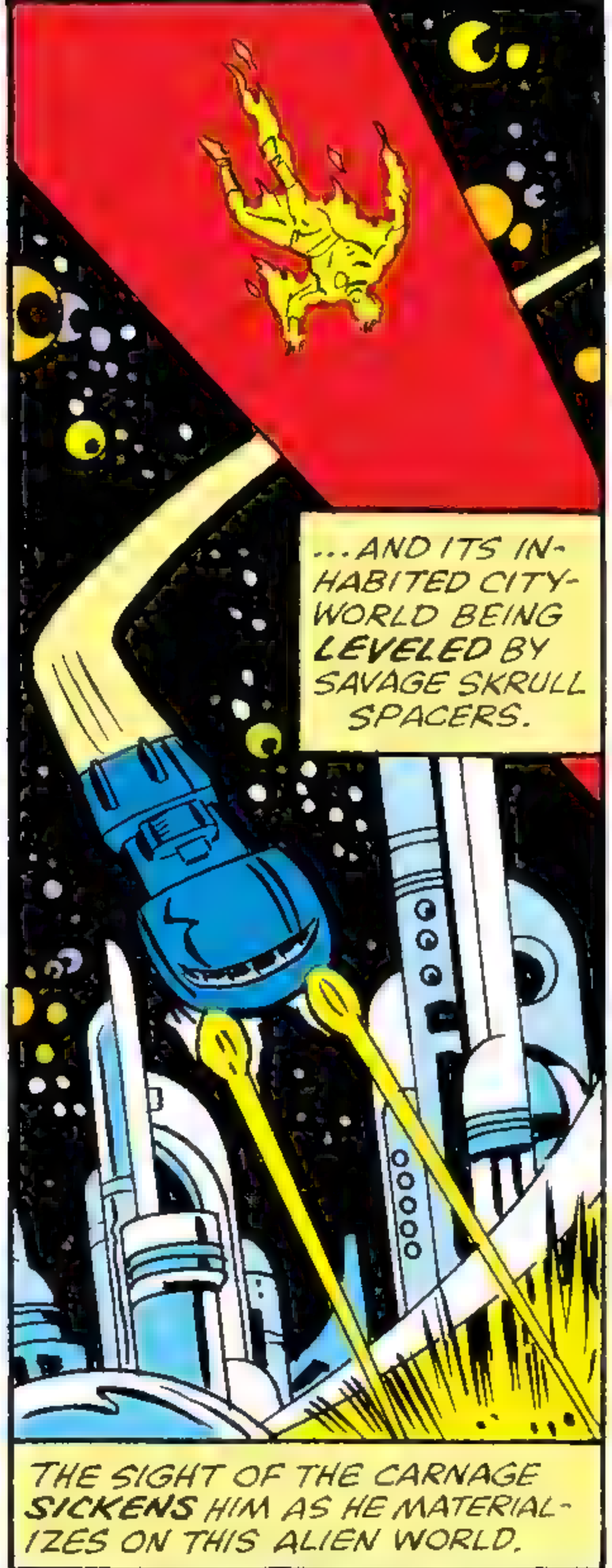
...AND THE NEXT MOMENT, FINDS THAT THE ATOMS OF HIS BODY SUDDENLY SEPARATE.



TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN STAR-SYSTEMS THOUSANDS OF LIGHT YEARS APART TAKES BUT MERE MOMENTS.



A HEARTBEAT LATER, THE QUIET YOUTH SEES THE FOUR-SECTIONED WORLD OF XANDAR LOOM INTO FOCUS...



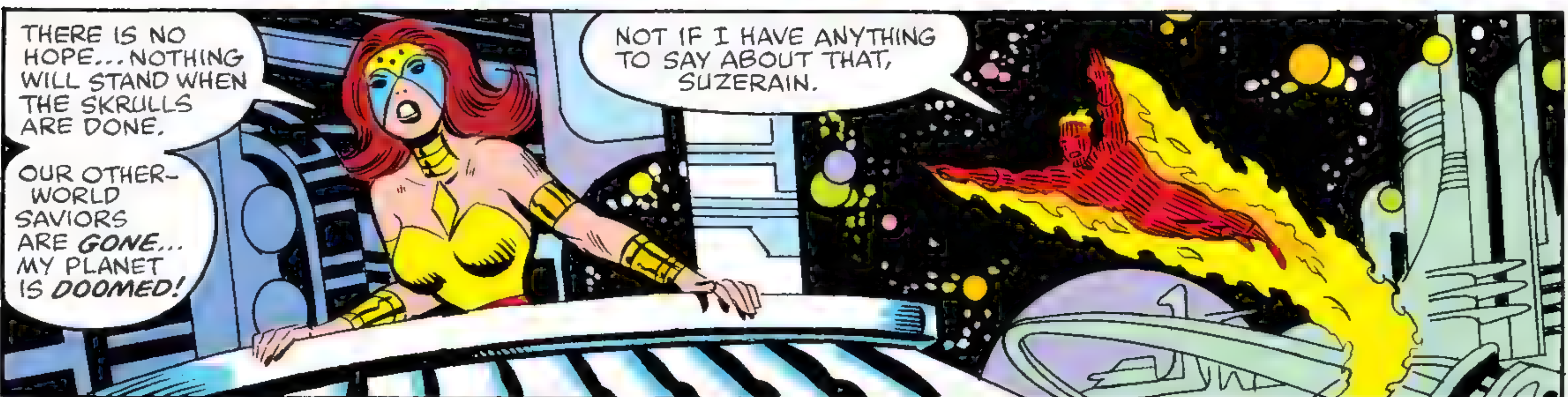
...AND ITS INHABITED CITY-WORLD BEING LEVELED BY SAVAGE SKRULL SPACERS.

THE SIGHT OF THE CARNAGE SICKENS HIM AS HE MATERIALIZES ON THIS ALIEN WORLD.

THERE IS NO HOPE... NOTHING WILL STAND WHEN THE SKRULLS ARE DONE.

OUR OTHER-WORLD SAVIORS ARE GONE... MY PLANET IS DOOMED!

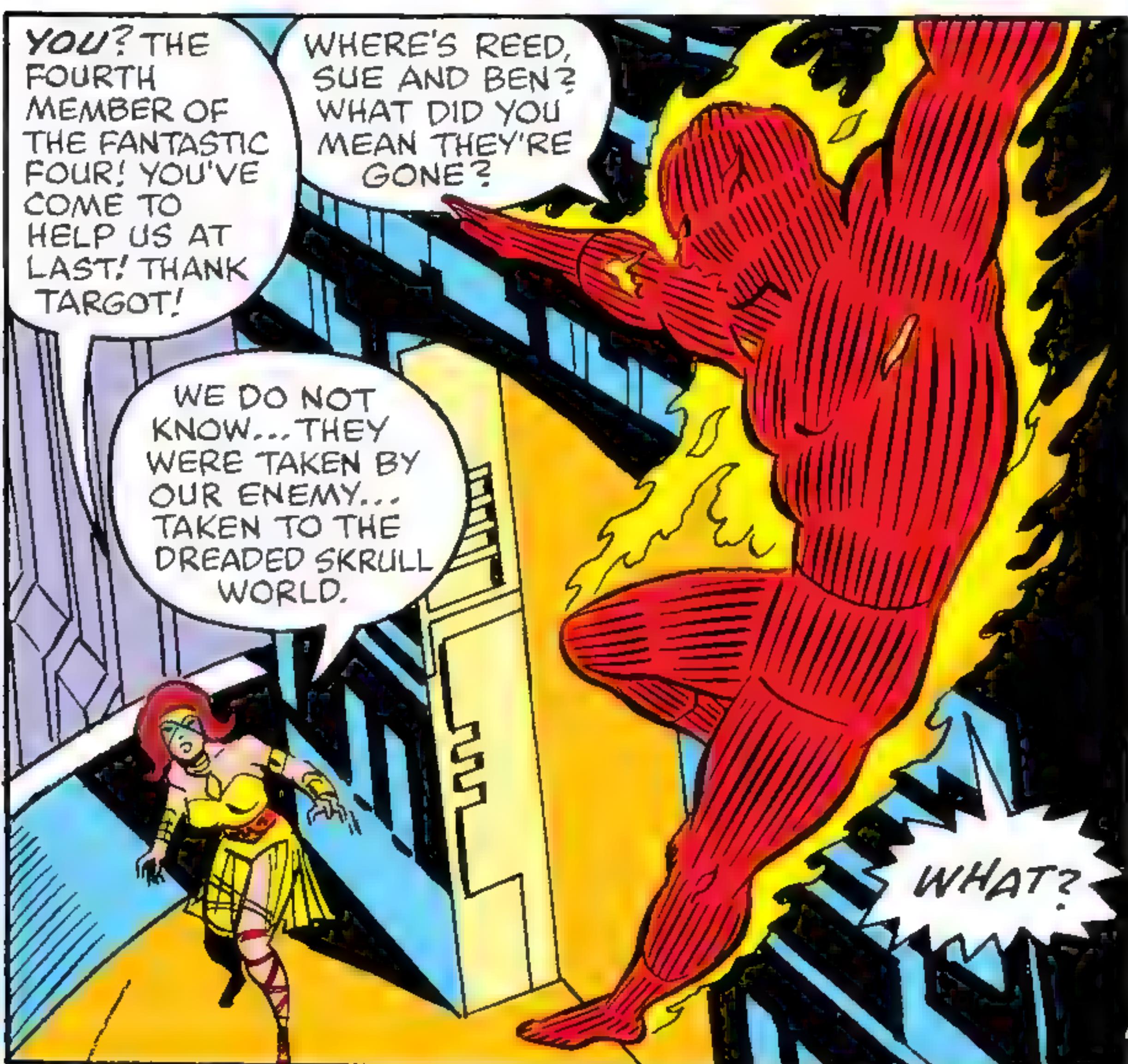
NOT IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THAT, SUZERAIN.



YOU? THE FOURTH MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR! YOU'VE COME TO HELP US AT LAST! THANK TARGET!

WHERE'S REED, SUE AND BEN? WHAT DID YOU MEAN THEY'RE GONE?

WE DO NOT KNOW... THEY WERE TAKEN BY OUR ENEMY... TAKEN TO THE DREADED SKRULL WORLD.



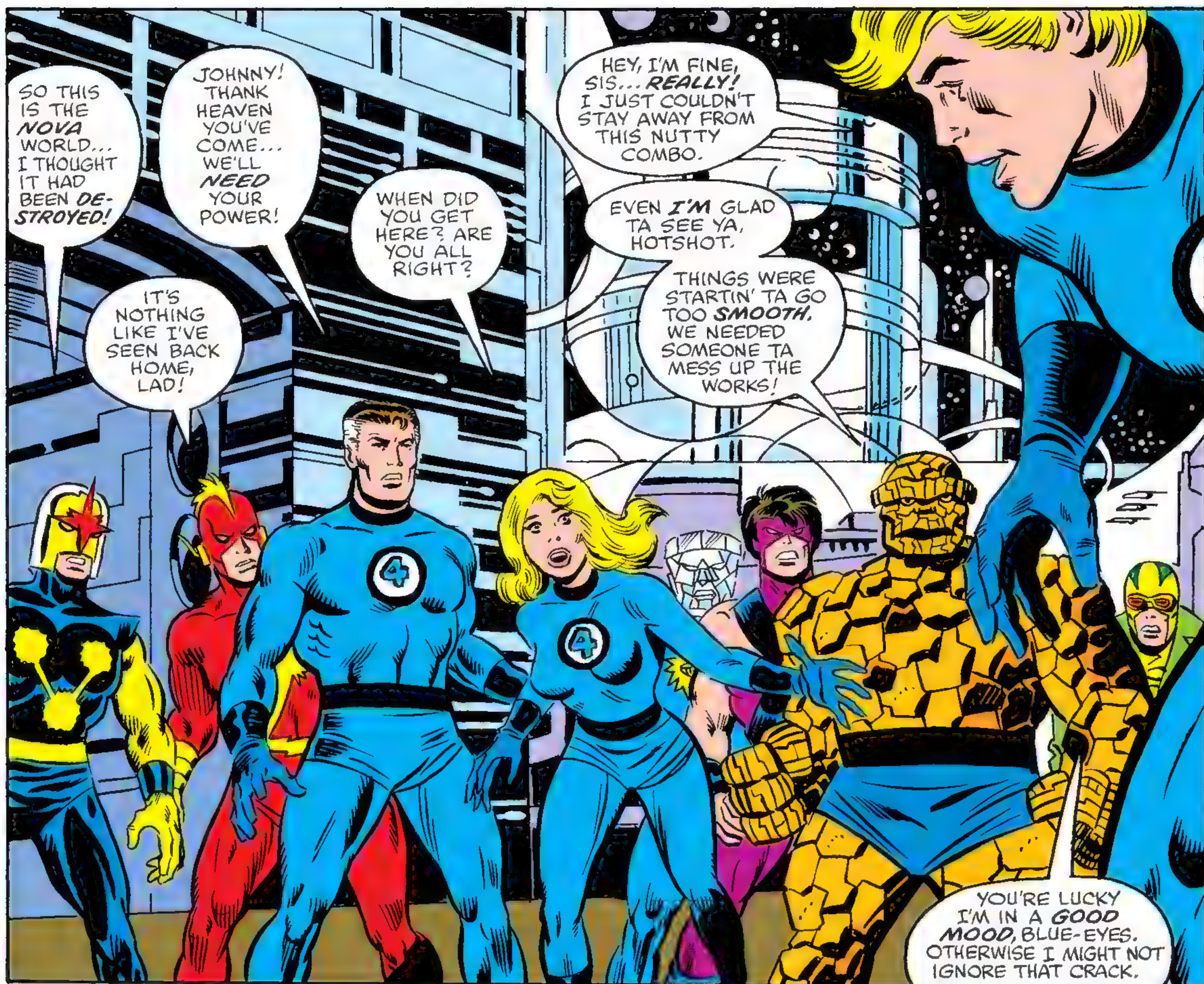
WHAT?

TAKE IT EASY, HOTSHOT. WE AIN'T DEAD YET.

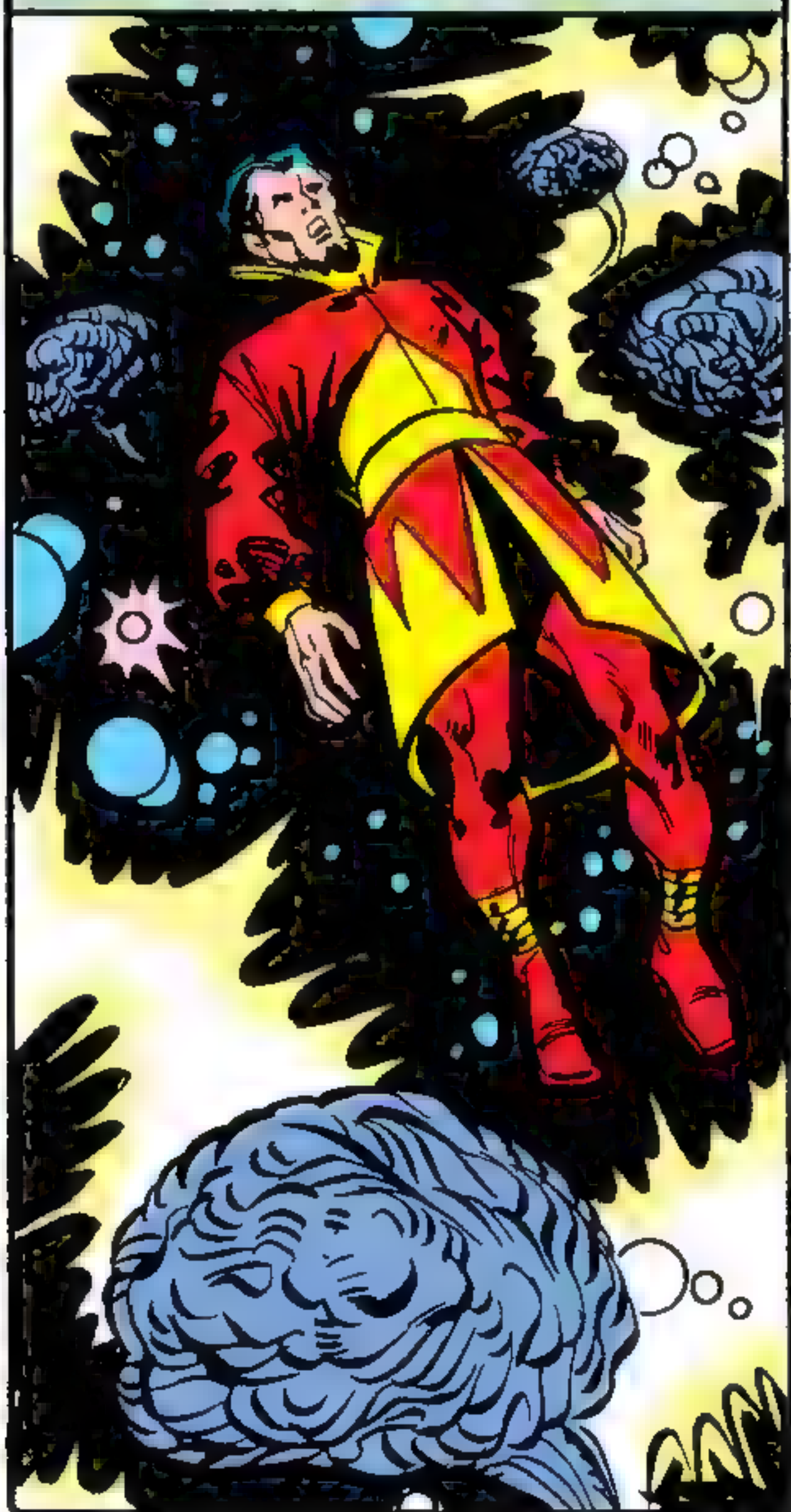
THAT GRAVELLY VOICE... IT CAN ONLY BELONG TO ONE MAN!

SARON, PRAISE BE IT POSSIBLE!





THE LIVING COMPUTERS!
THE COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE
OF ALL THOSE WHO HAVE LIVED
ON XANDAR IS GATHERED HERE
IN THESE STEEL-CHROMIDE
CYLINDERS.

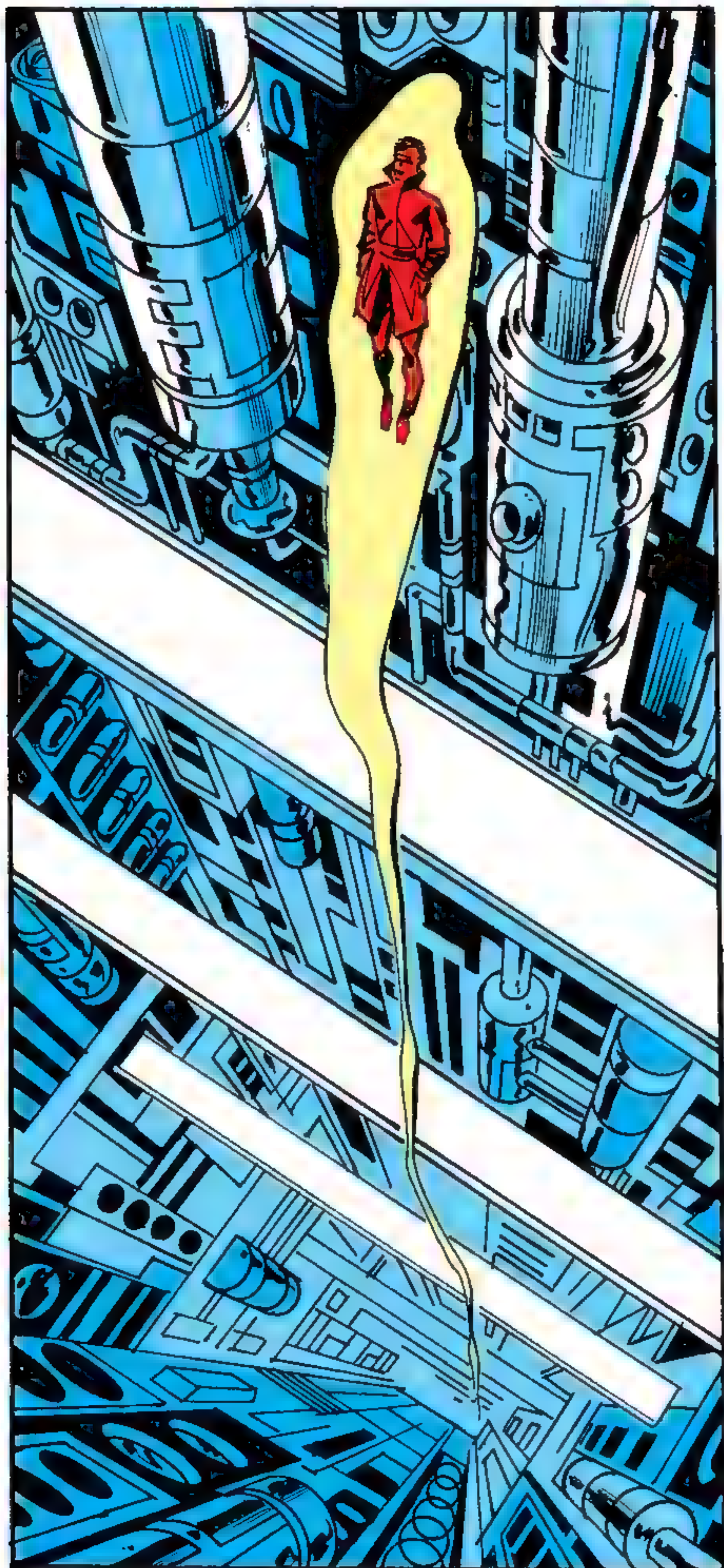


ITS COMBINED ENERGY
IS MIND-STAGGERING
TO BEHOLD.

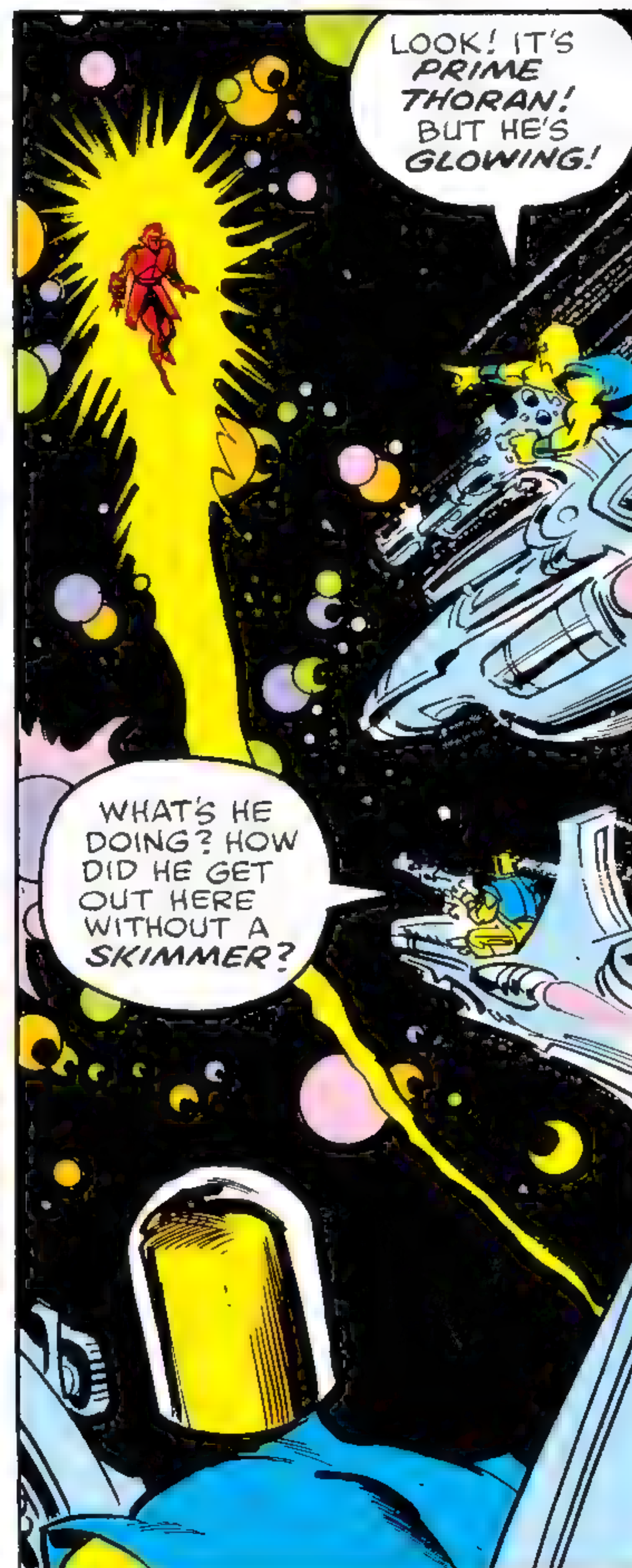
WITNESS THE
MAN CALLED
PRIME THORAN,
KEEPER OF
THE COMPUTER.



WHEN HE ENTERED THE THROBBING,
PULSATING CHAMBER TO SEEK
SALVATION FOR HIS PEOPLE, HE
WAS SIMPLY A MAN.



WHEN HE LEAVES...HE WILL BECOME
SOMETHING MORE. SOMETHING
MUCH MORE!



THE BEING WHO WAS PRIME THORAN IS LIKE A LAMBERT FLAME, A LUMINOUS PHAETHON RIDING HIS CHARIOT HIGH TO THE SUN, LIGHTING UP THE HEAVENS EVEN AS HE SOARS SKYWARD.



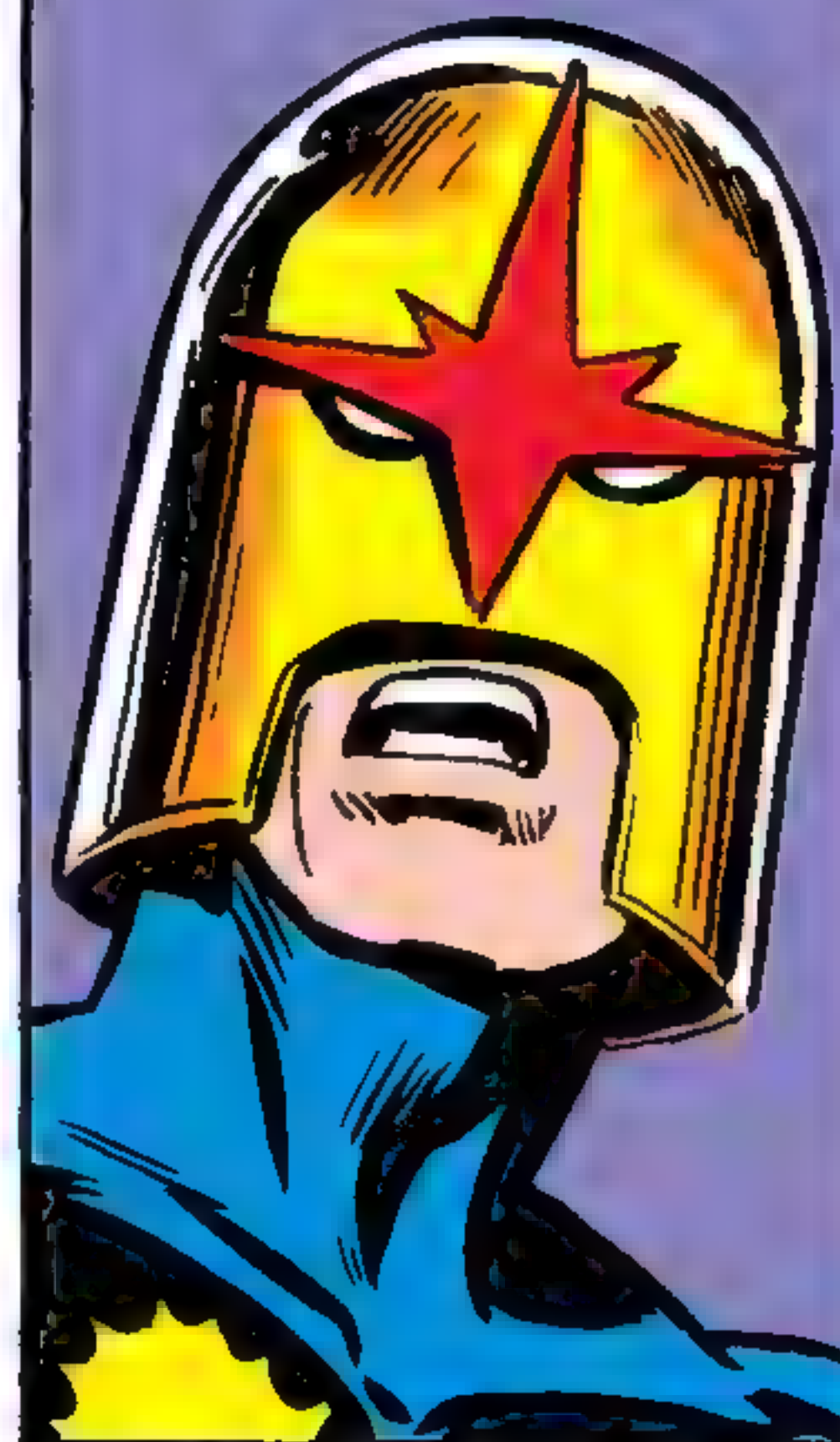
HE PAUSES EVER-SO-BRIEFLY AND BECKONS THE OTHERS TO FOLLOW HIM...

...AND, FOR REASONS EVEN THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND, FOLLOW HIM THEY DO.

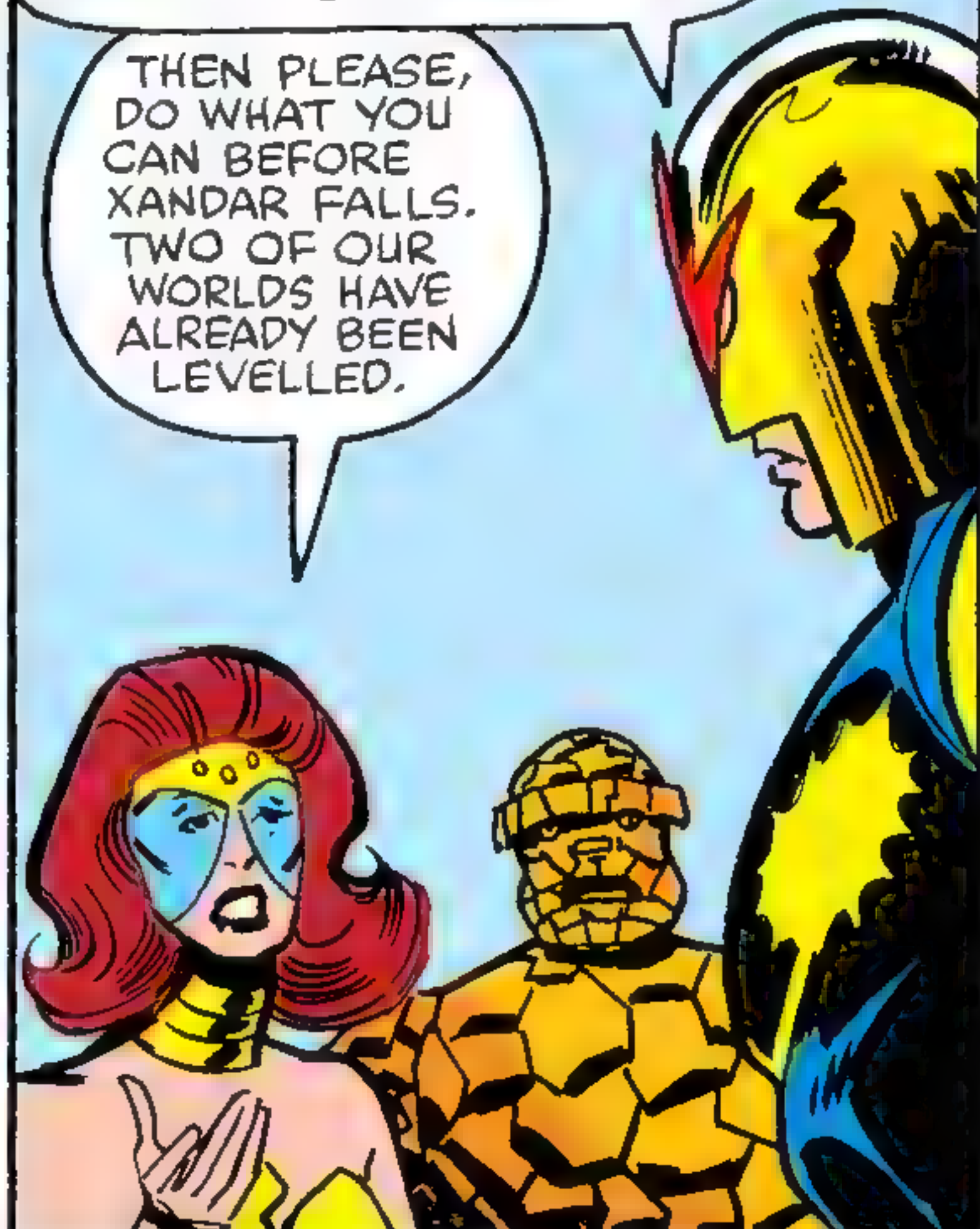


PRIME THORAN IS LEADING THEM INTO BATTLE? BUT HE'S NOT A WARRIOR.

I DON'T KNOW PRIME THORAN. I DON'T KNOW YOU.

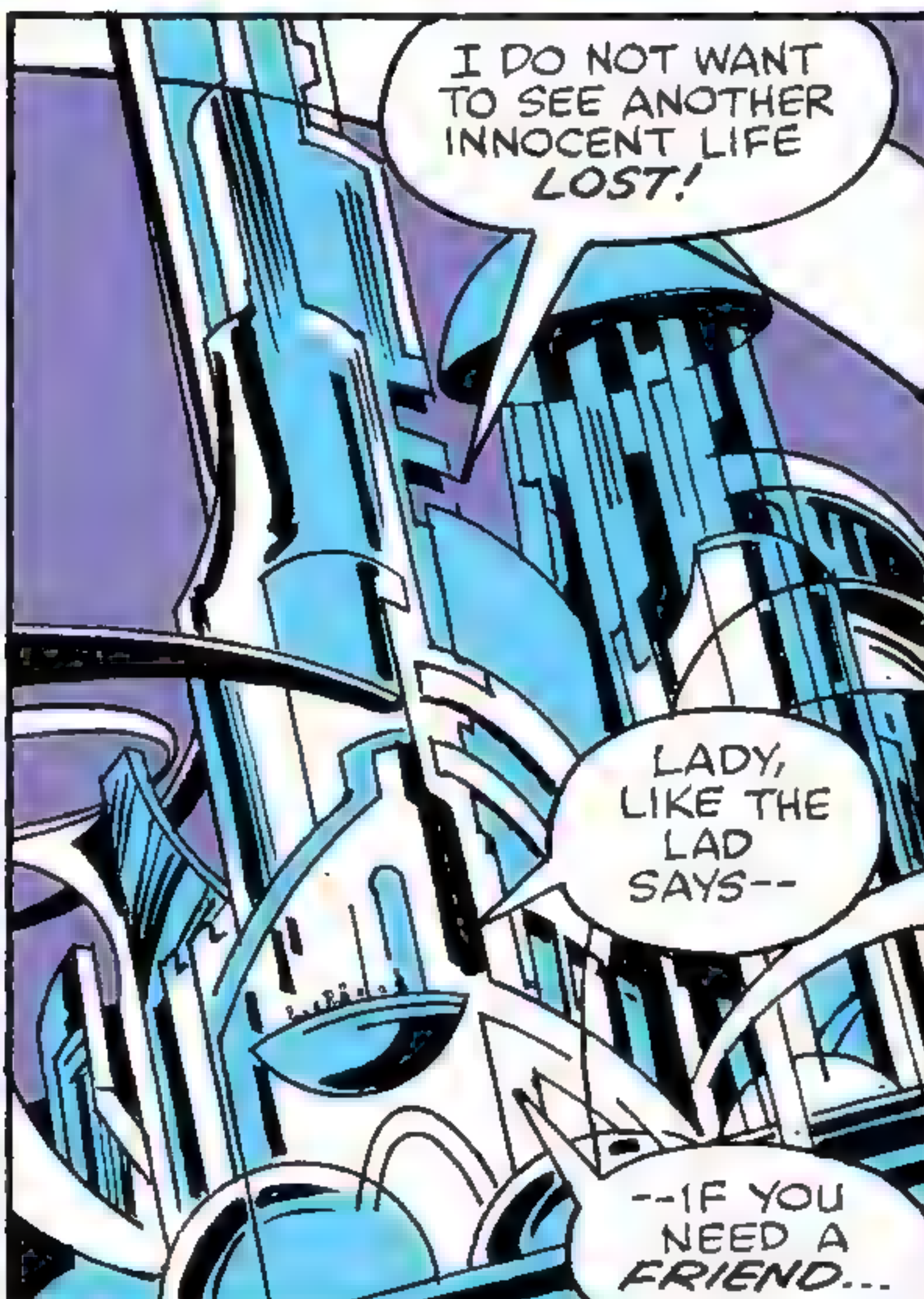


BUT IF YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE AGAINST THE SKRULLS-- COUNT NOVA IN!



THEN PLEASE, DO WHAT YOU CAN BEFORE XANDAR FALLS. TWO OF OUR WORLDS HAVE ALREADY BEEN LEVELLED.

I DO NOT WANT TO SEE ANOTHER INNOCENT LIFE LOST!



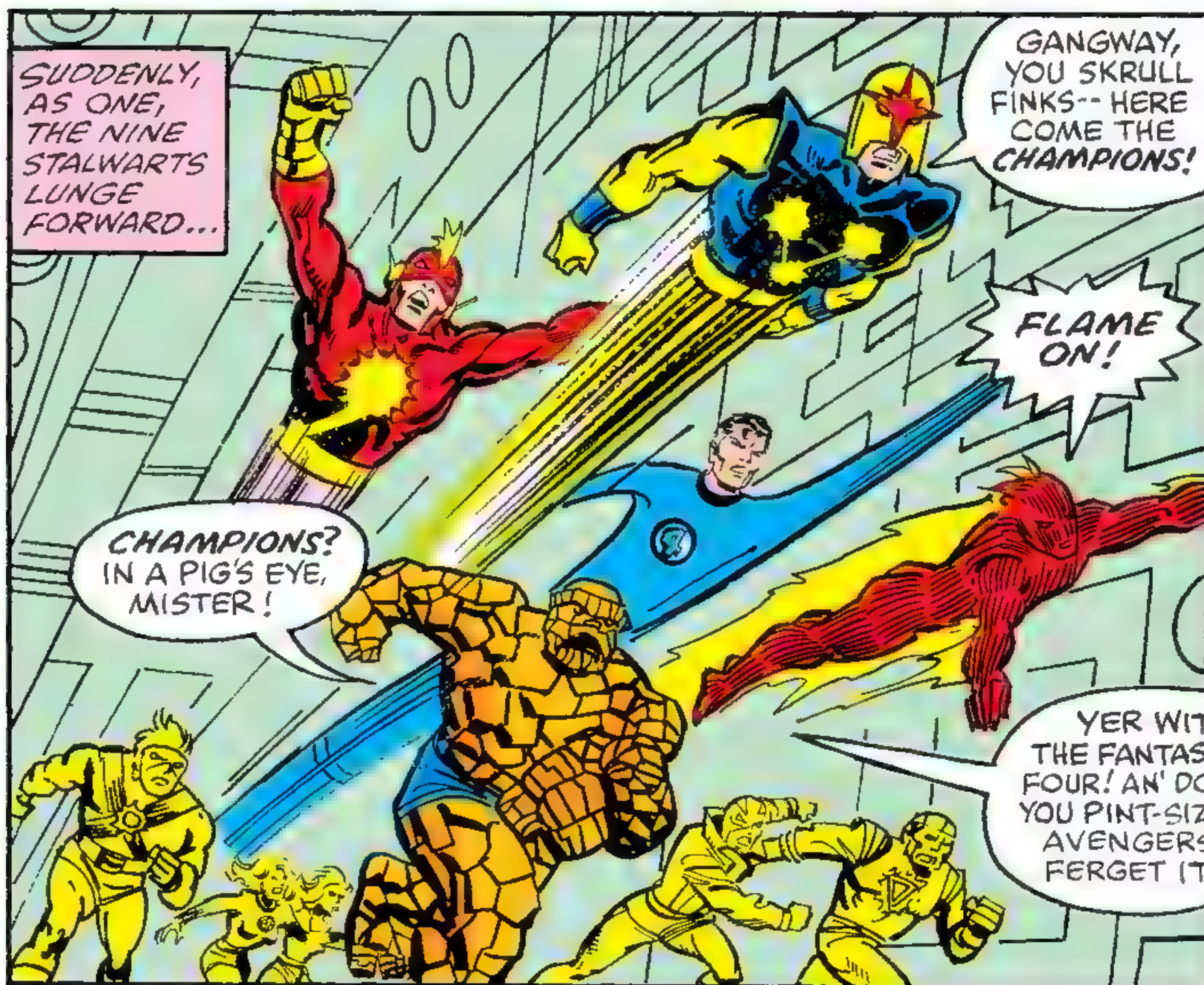
LADY, LIKE THE LAD SAYS--

--IF YOU NEED A FRIEND...

...YOU CAN COUNT ON-- THE COMET!



SUDDENLY, AS ONE, THE NINE STALWARTS LUNGE FORWARD...



CHAMPIONS? IN A PIG'S EYE, MISTER!

GANGWAY, YOU SKRULL FINKS-- HERE COME THE CHAMPIONS!

FLAME ON!

YER WITH THE FANTASTIC FOUR! AN' DON'T YOU PINT-SIZED AVENGERS FERGET IT!

THIS IS THE WAY TO THE COMPUTERS...IT'S THE FASTEST WAY TO FIND OUT WHERE THE SKRULLS ARE GOING TO ATTACK NEXT.



BLUE BLAZES! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

STRETCHO! IT'S NOT THE SKRULLS WE GOTTA WORRY ABOUT NOW!

HE STANDS IMPASSIVE,
OBLIVIOUS TO THE MINOR
BEINGS WHO GAWK AT HIM
IN AWE AND WONDERMENT.

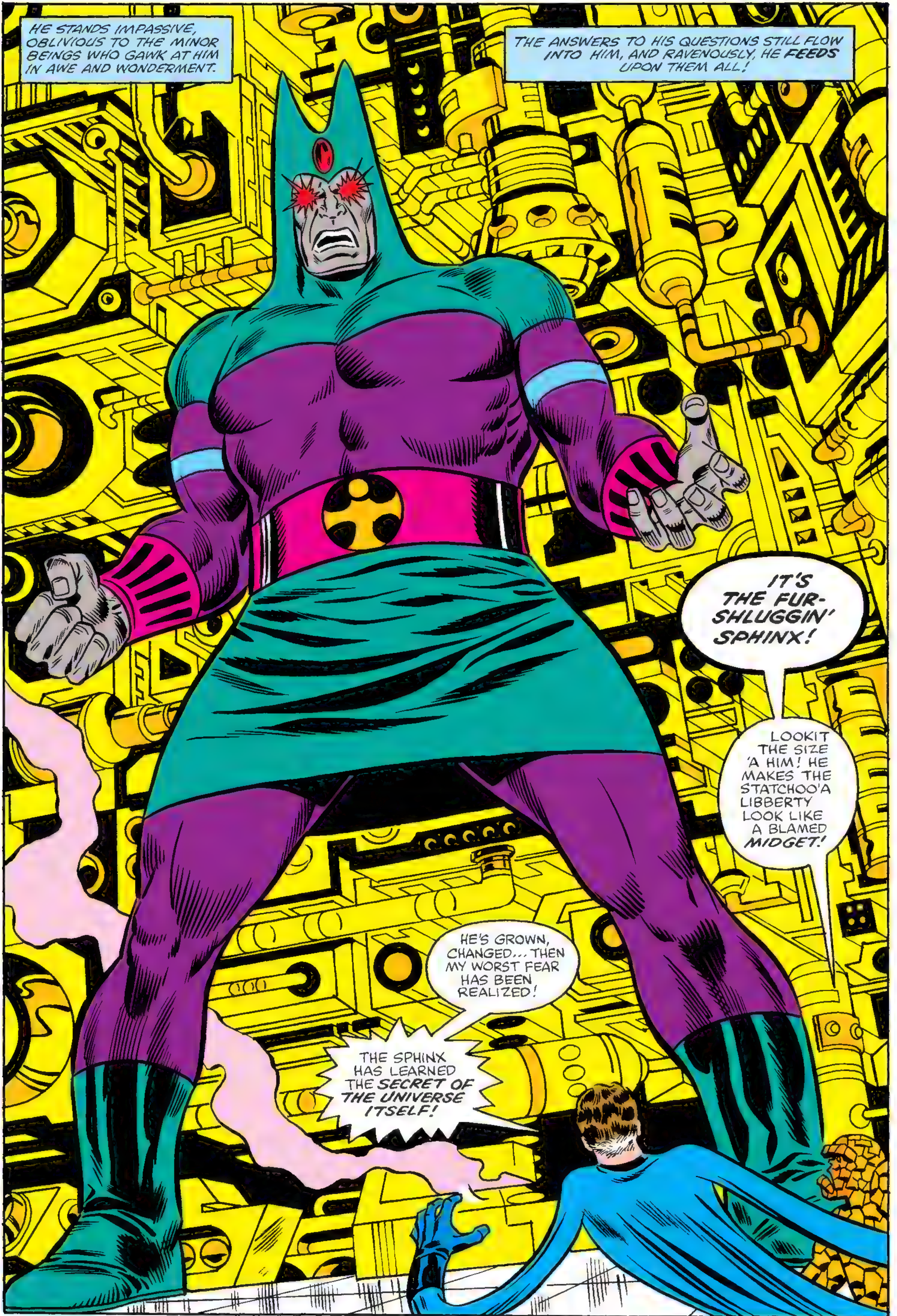
THE ANSWERS TO HIS QUESTIONS STILL FLOW
INTO HIM, AND RAVENOUSLY, HE FEEDS
UPON THEM ALL!

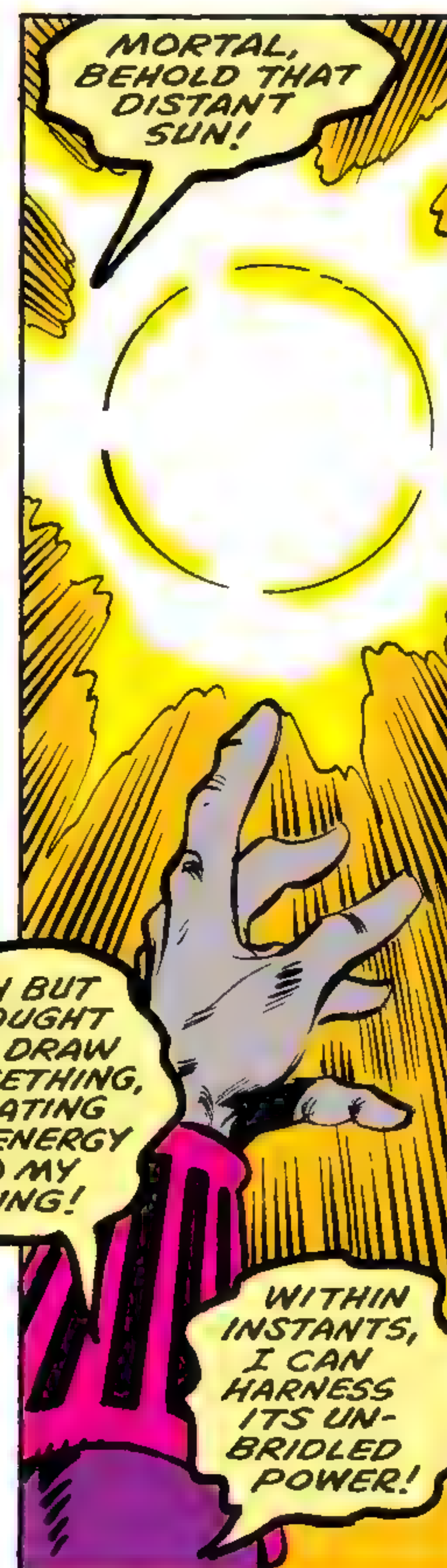
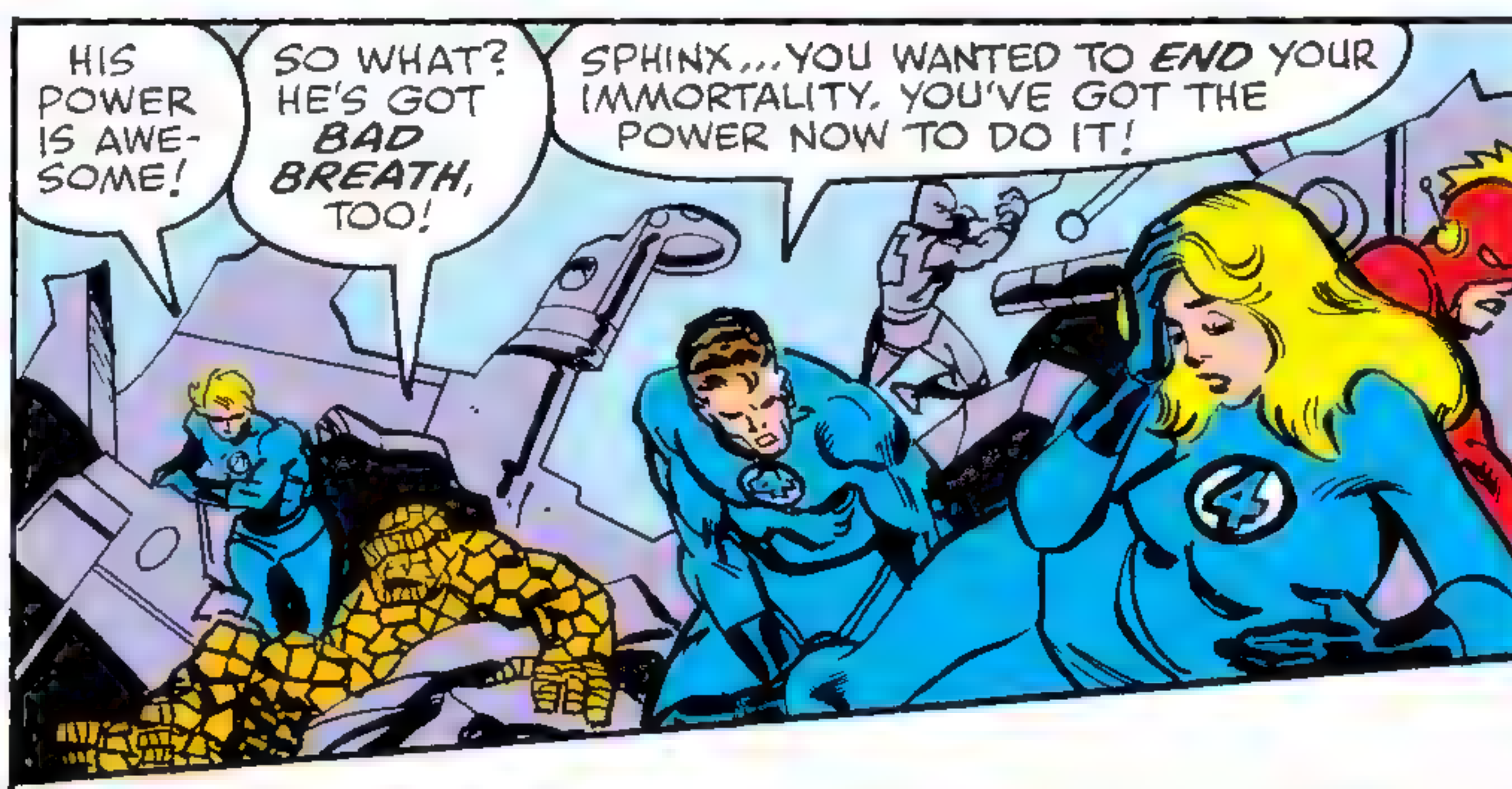
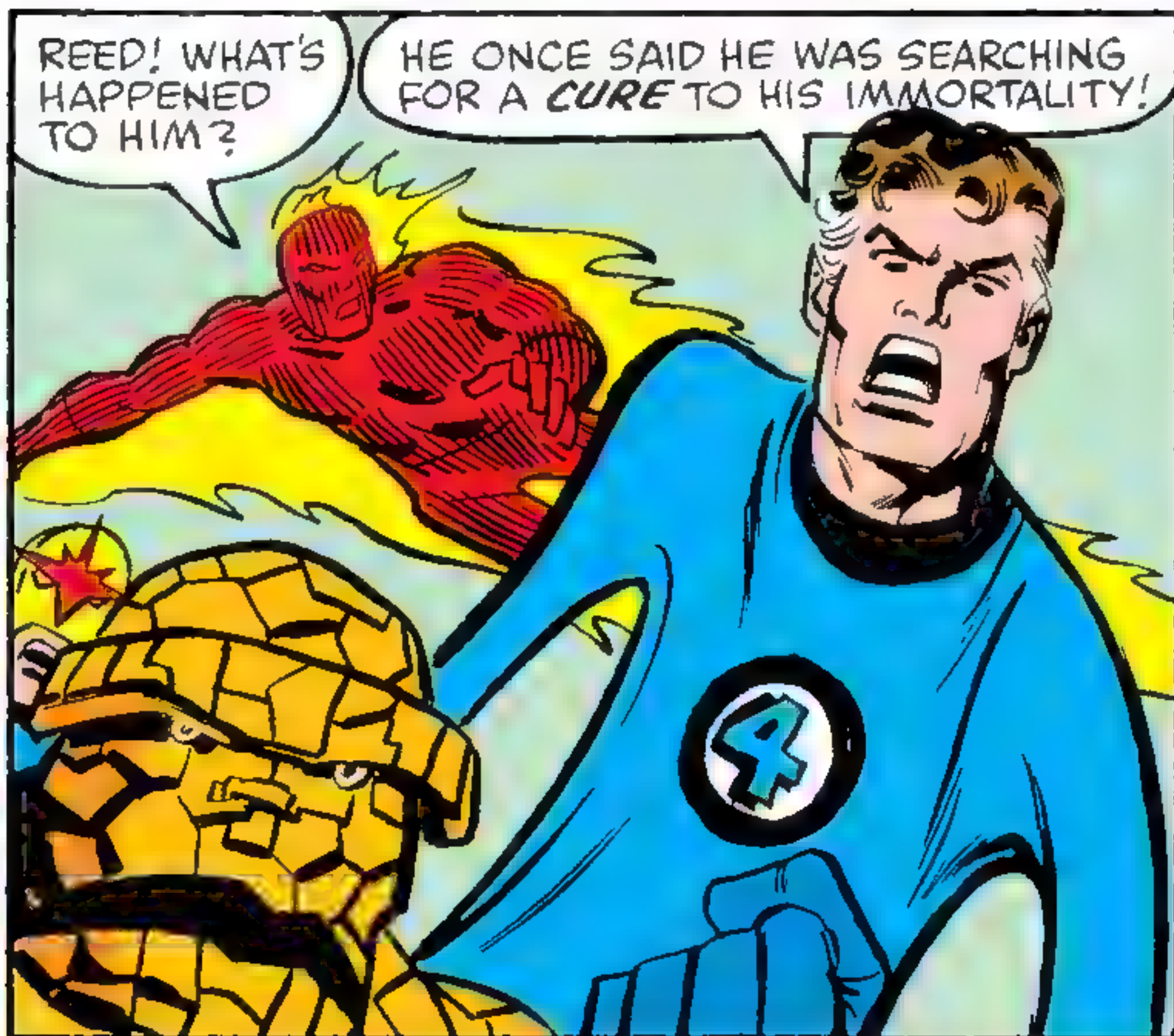
IT'S
THE FUR-
SHLUGGIN'
SPHINX!

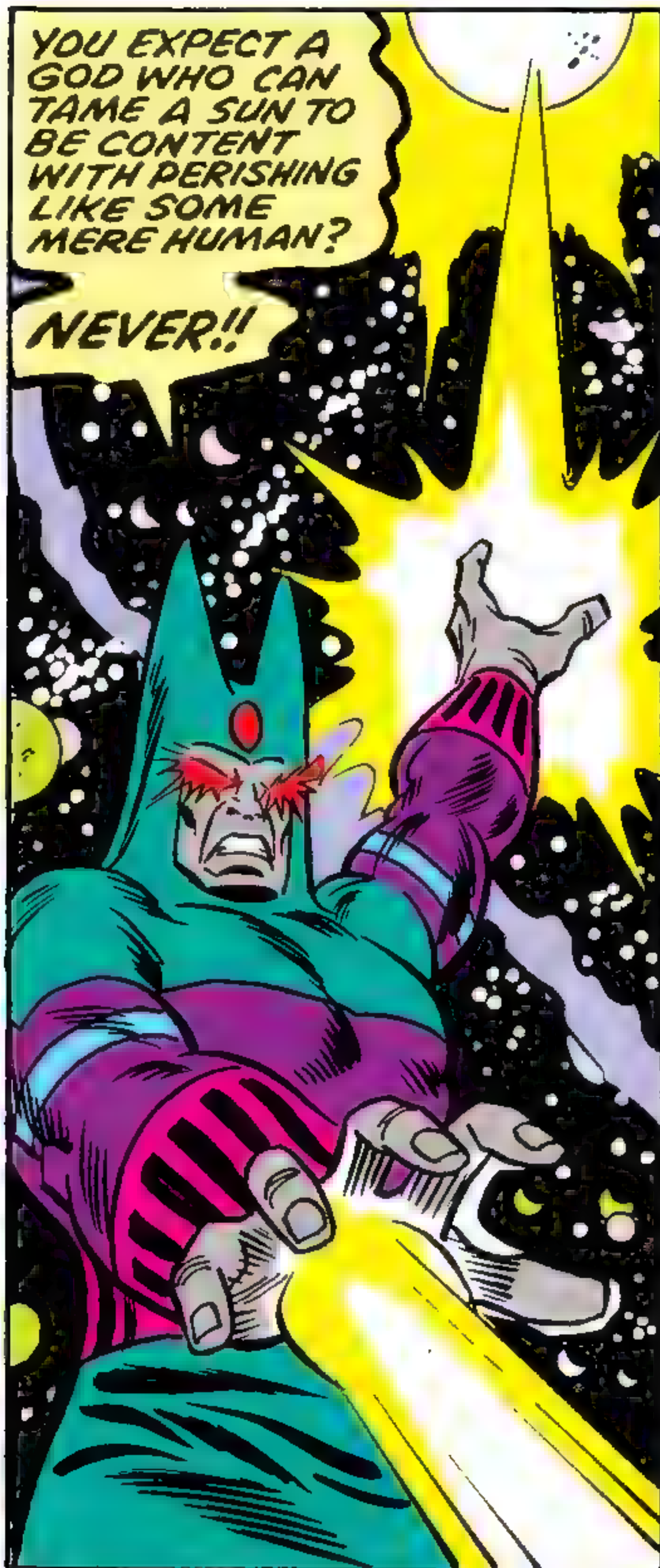
LOOKIT
THE SIZE
'A HIM! HE
MAKES THE
STATCHOO'A
LIBBERTY
LOOK LIKE
A BLAMED
MIDGET!

HE'S GROWN,
CHANGED... THEN
MY WORST FEAR
HAS BEEN
REALIZED!

THE SPHINX
HAS LEARNED
THE SECRET OF
THE UNIVERSE
ITSELF!







YOU EXPECT A GOD WHO CAN TAME A SUN TO BE CONTENT WITH PERISHING LIKE SOME MERE HUMAN?

NEVER!!

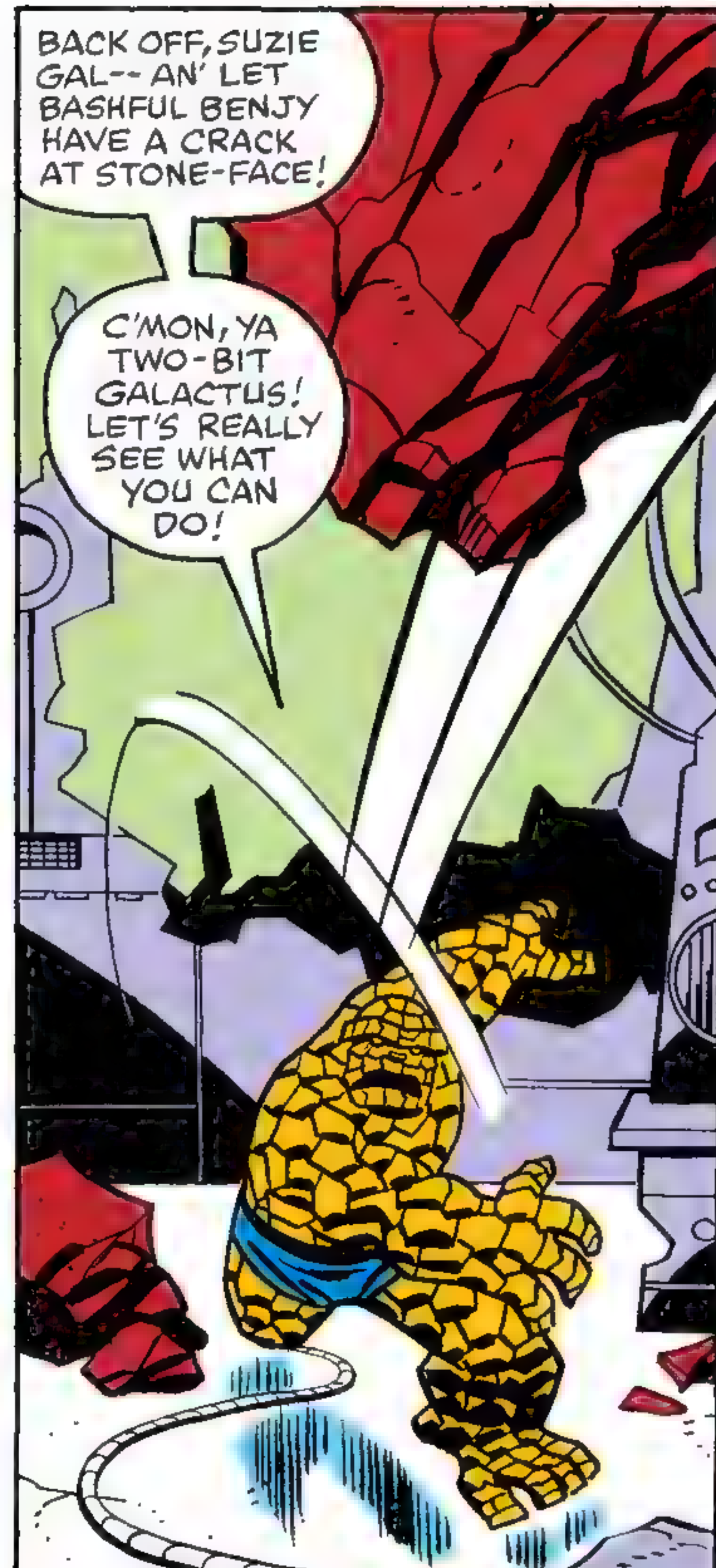


NOW THAT I HAVE SEEN THE GLORY OF UNLIMITED POWER, I SHALL NEVER RELINQUISH IT!

LOOK AT HIS EYES-- IT'S AS I FEARED-- THE SPHINX HAS GONE MAD WITH POWER!

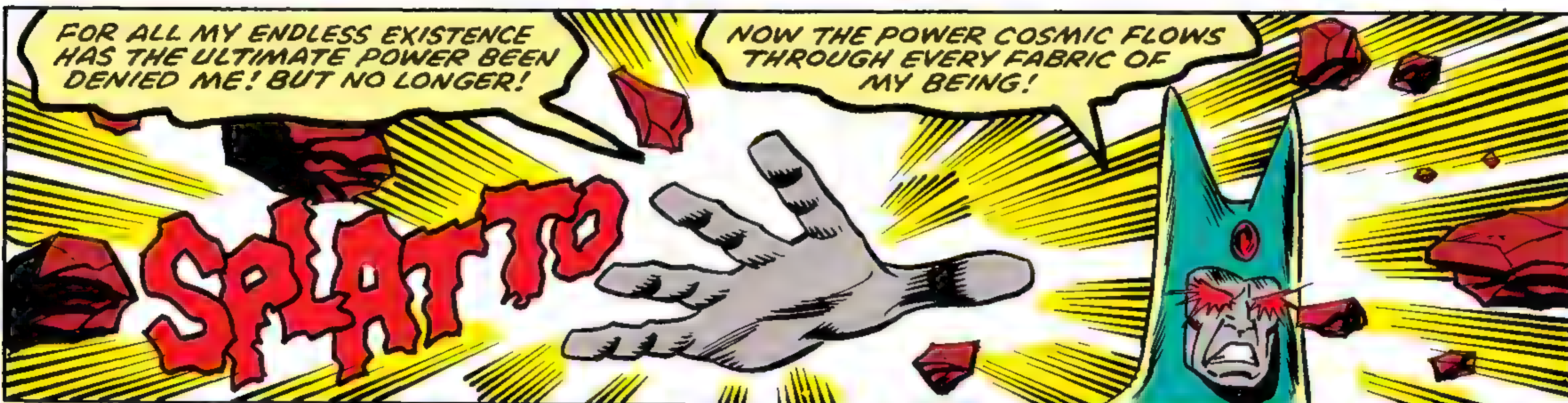
FOOM!

REED!! HE'S SHATTERED MY FORCE FIELD. NOTHING CAN STOP HIM!



BACK OFF, SUZIE GAL-- AN' LET BASHFUL BENJY HAVE A CRACK AT STONE-FACE!

C'MON, YA TWO-BIT GALACTUS! LET'S REALLY SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO!



FOR ALL MY ENDLESS EXISTENCE HAS THE ULTIMATE POWER BEEN DENIED ME! BUT NO LONGER!

NOW THE POWER COSMIC FLOWS THROUGH EVERY FABRIC OF MY BEING!

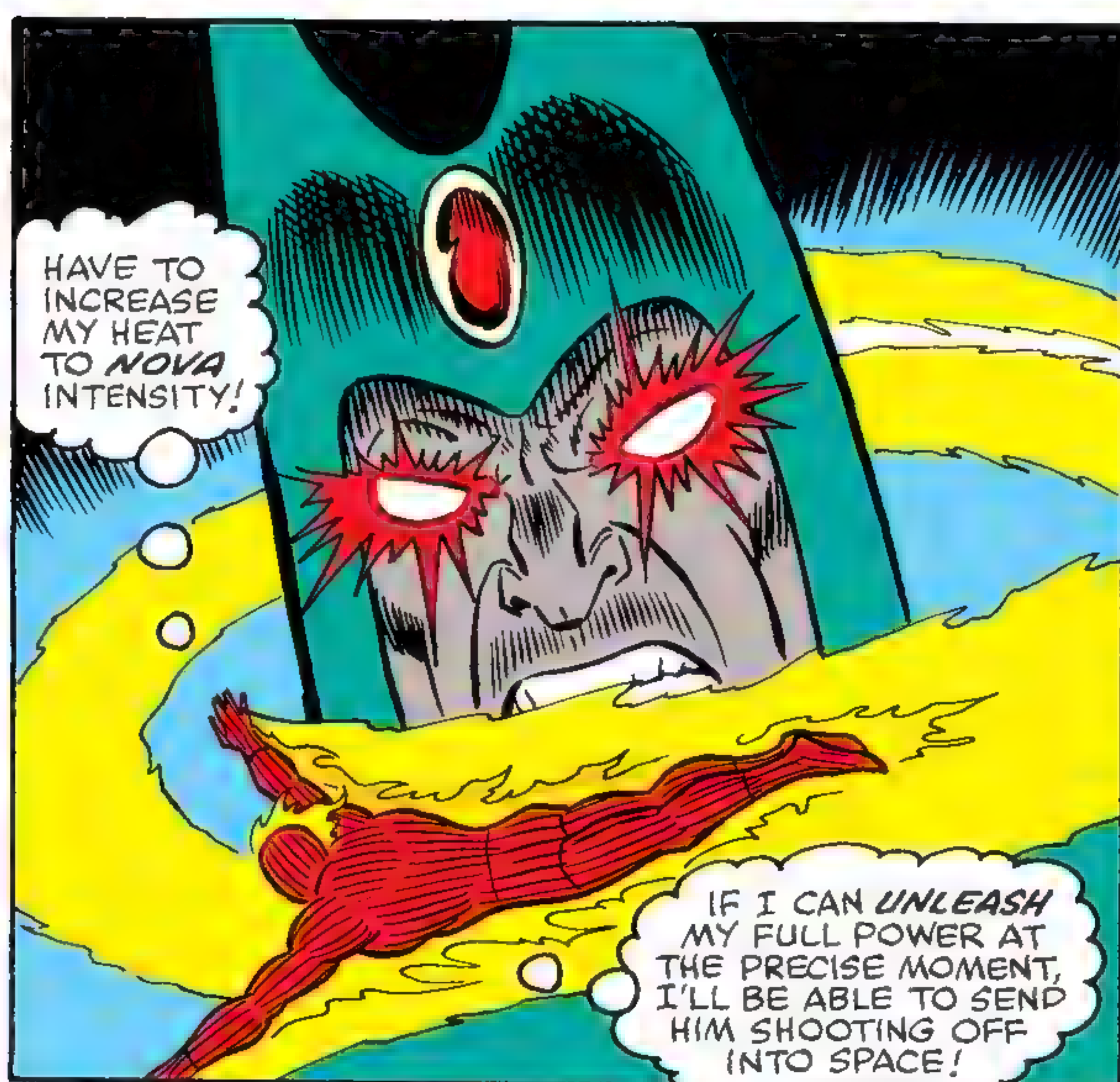


WE'VE HEARD OTHER JOKERS MAKE THAT CLAIM, SPHINX--

-- BUT WE'VE ALWAYS DEFEATED THEM!

NO MATTER HOW BIG YOU THINK YOU ARE, MISTER--

-- THE FANTASTIC FOUR WILL CUT YOU DOWN TO SIZE!



HAVE TO INCREASE MY HEAT TO NOVA INTENSITY!

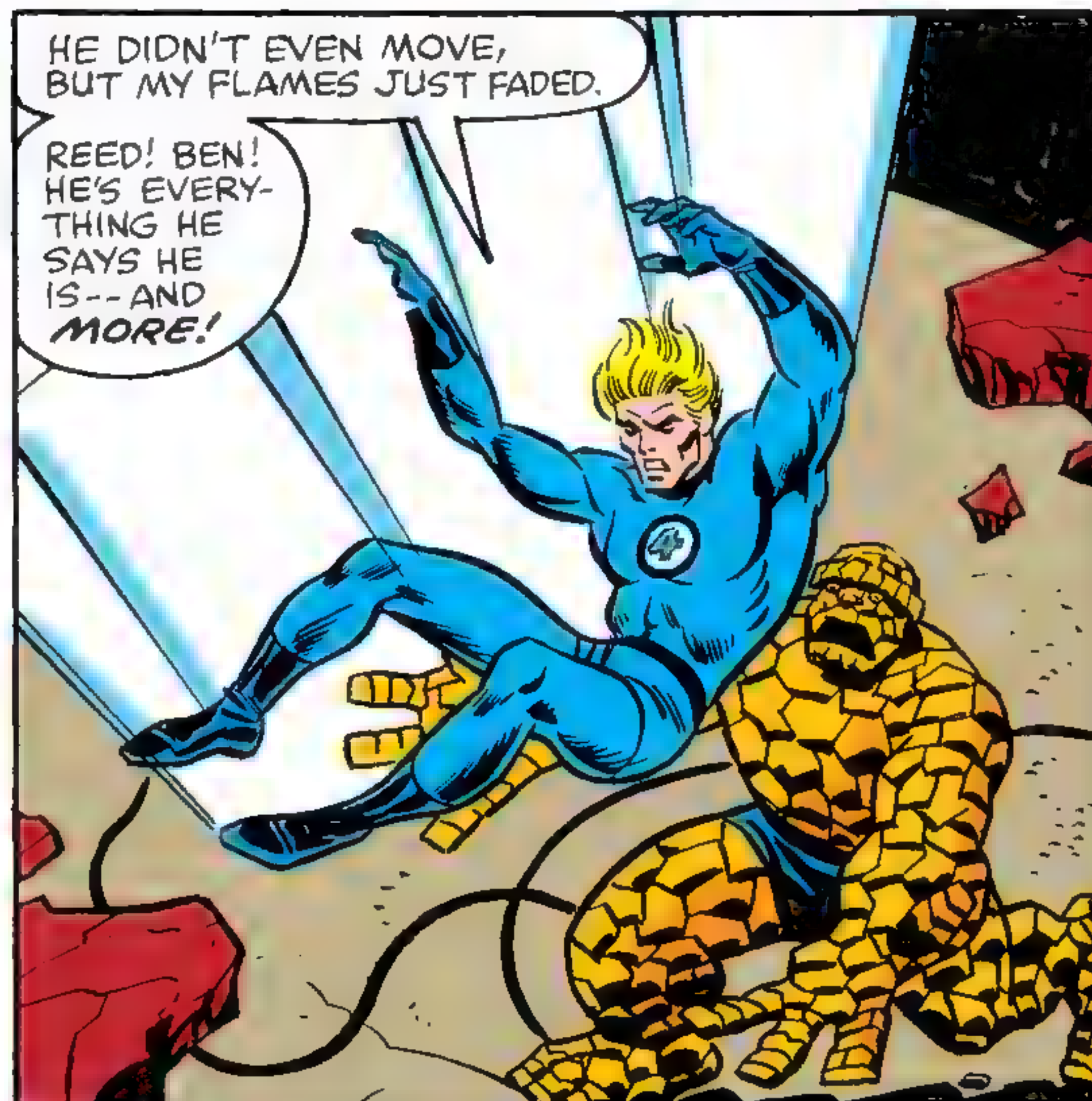
IF I CAN UNLEASH MY FULL POWER AT THE PRECISE MOMENT, I'LL BE ABLE TO SEND HIM SHOOTING OFF INTO SPACE!



IF YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE THE POWER TO DESTROY A GOD, YOU ARE TRULY INSANE!

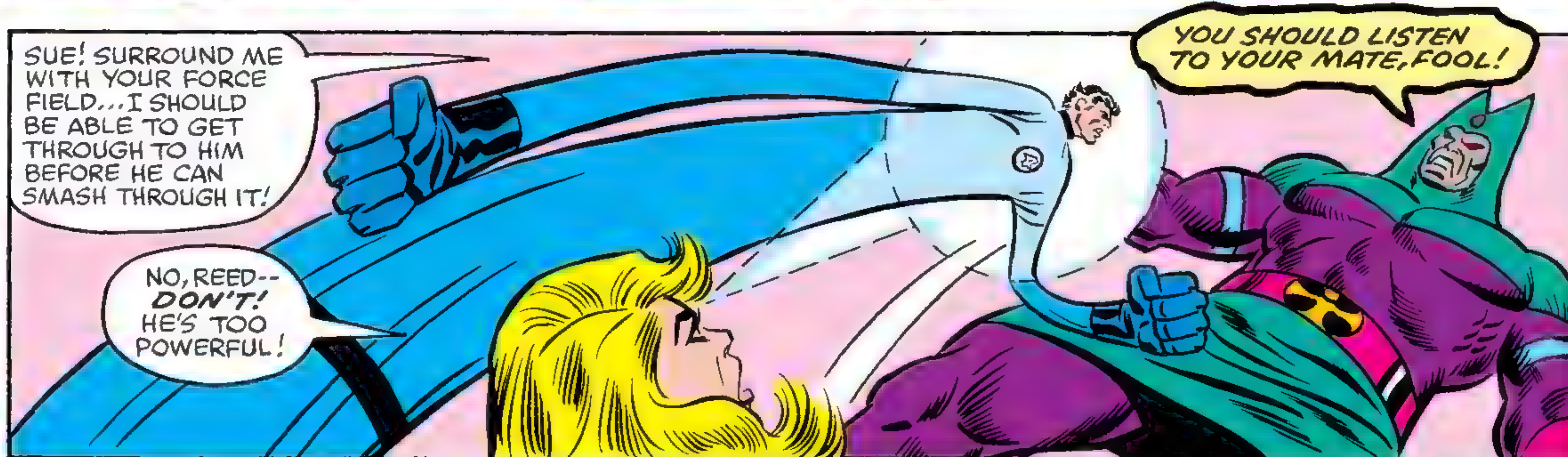
DON'T YOU YET REALIZE THERE IS NOTHING I CAN NOT DO..?

EVEN YOUR THOUGHTS ARE MINE TO PERCEIVE... AND TO ACT UPON!



HE DIDN'T EVEN MOVE, BUT MY FLAMES JUST FADED.

REED! BEN! HE'S EVERYTHING HE SAYS HE IS-- AND MORE!



SUE! SURROUND ME WITH YOUR FORCE FIELD... I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET THROUGH TO HIM BEFORE HE CAN SMASH THROUGH IT!

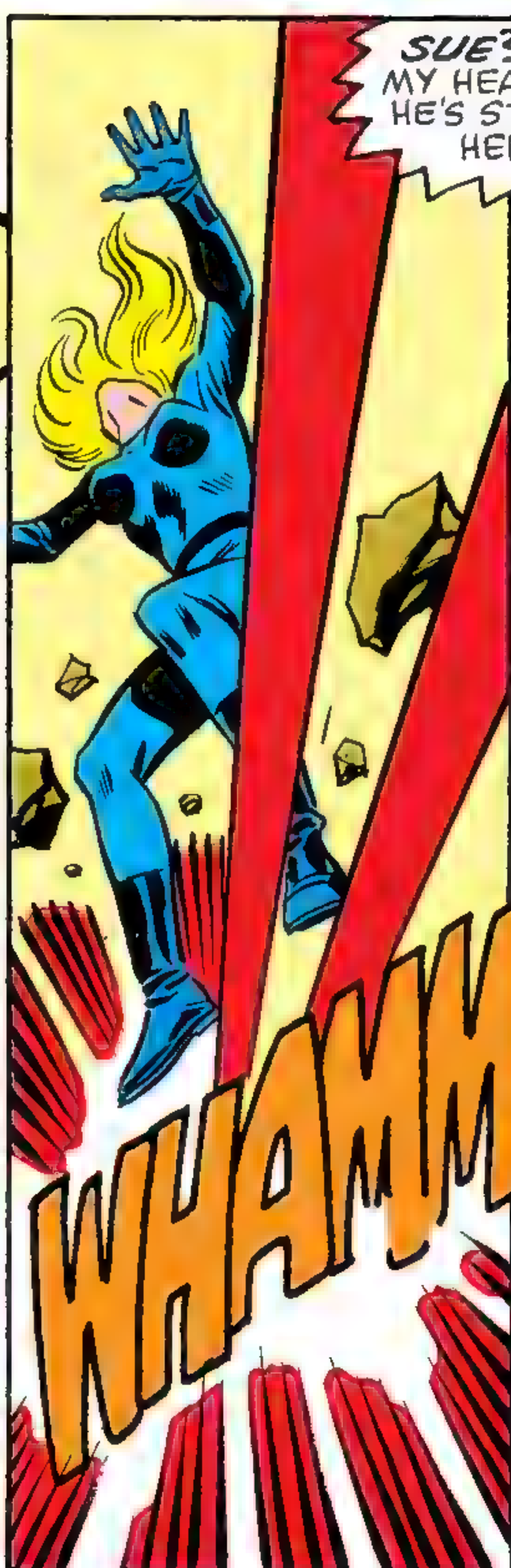
NO, REED-- DON'T! HE'S TOO POWERFUL!

YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO YOUR MATE, FOOL!



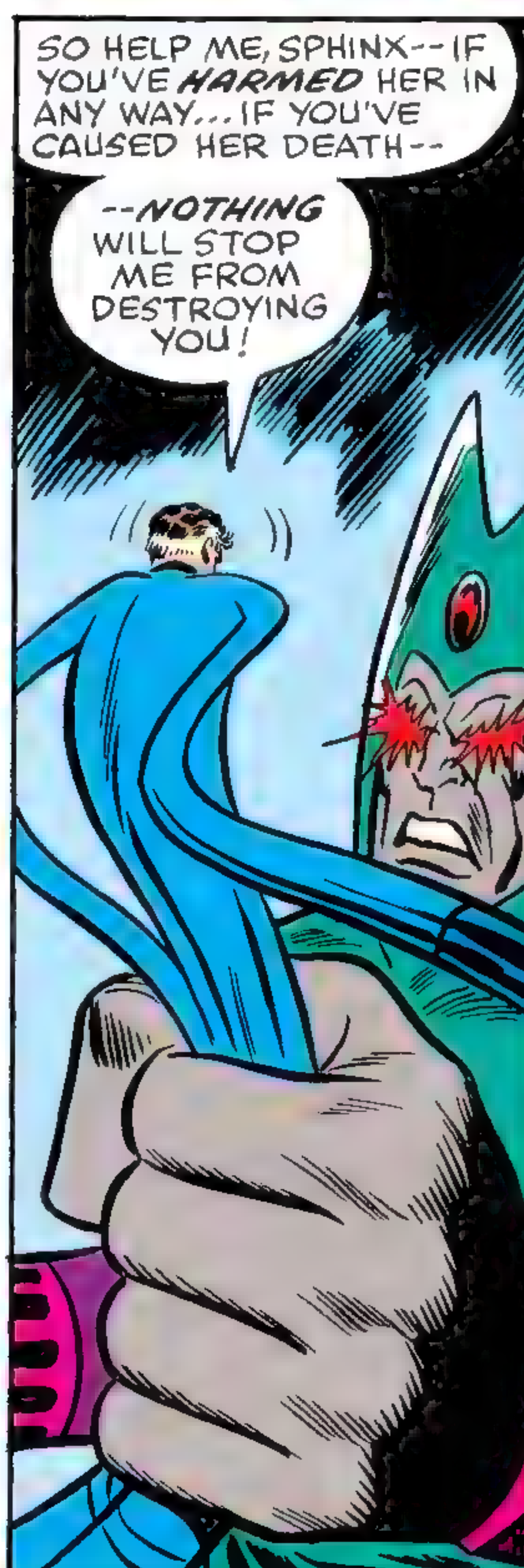
YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO DO SO AGAIN!

RATHER THAN ATTACK THE TREE... I SHALL DESTROY THE ROOT!



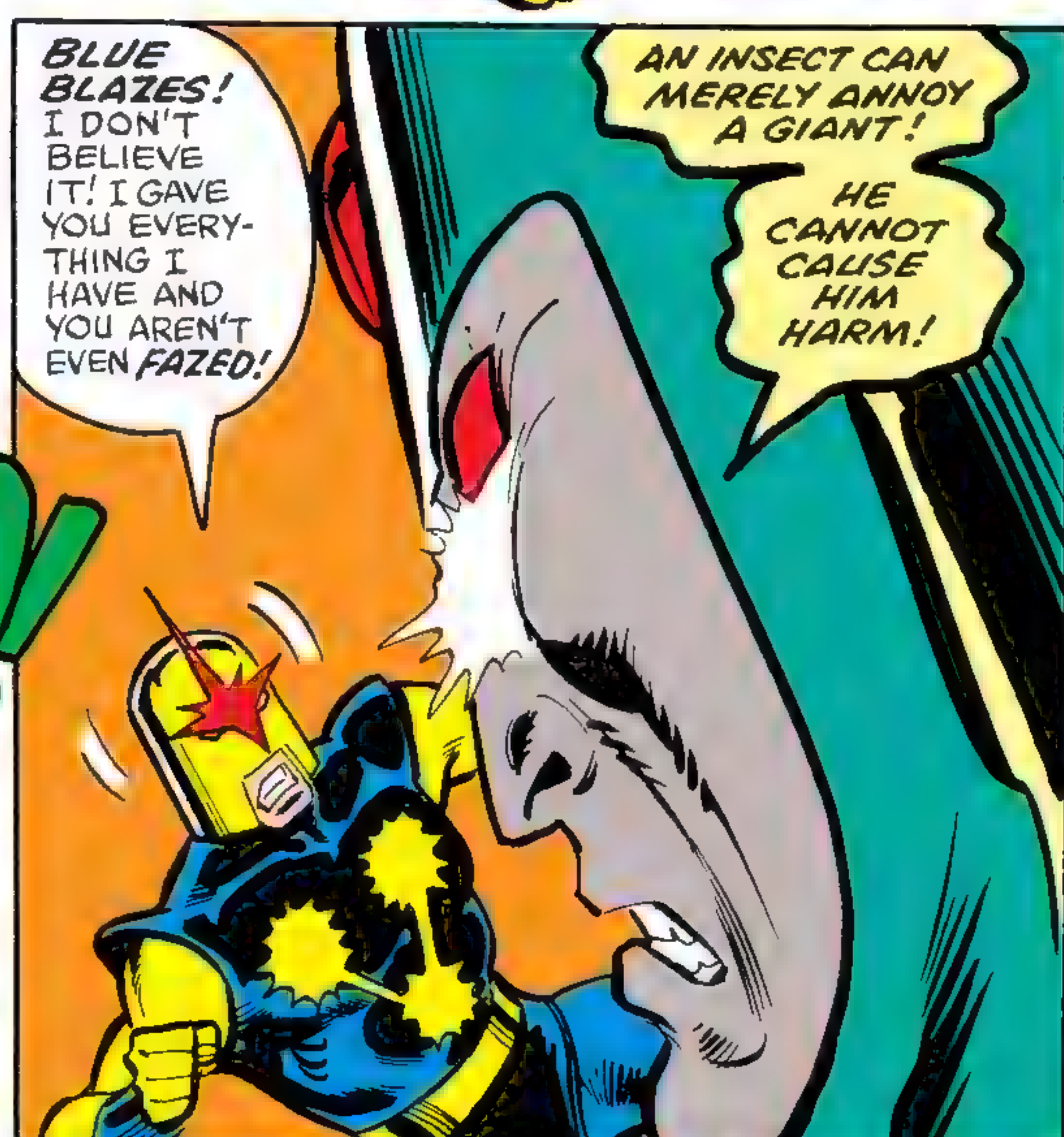
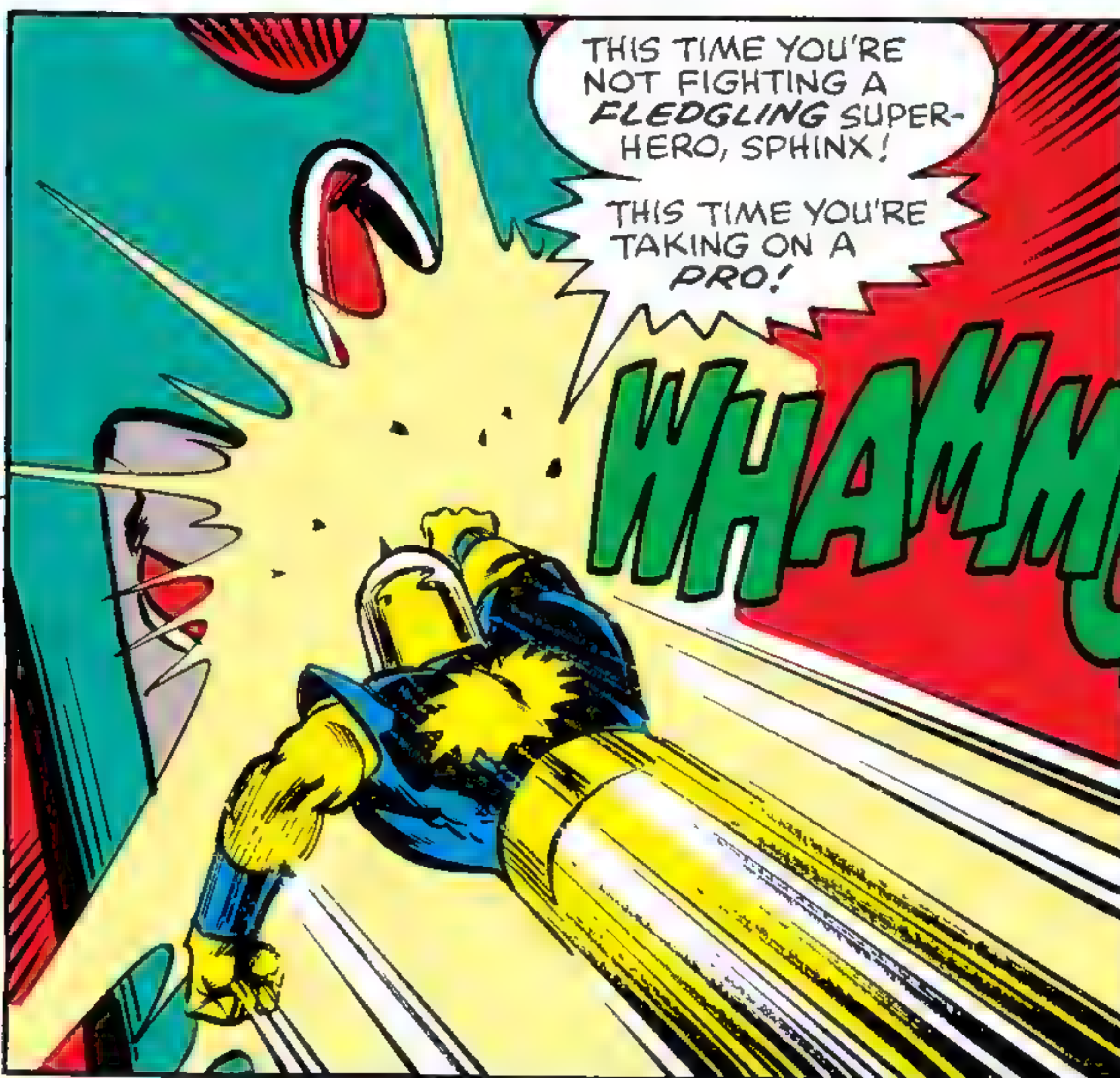
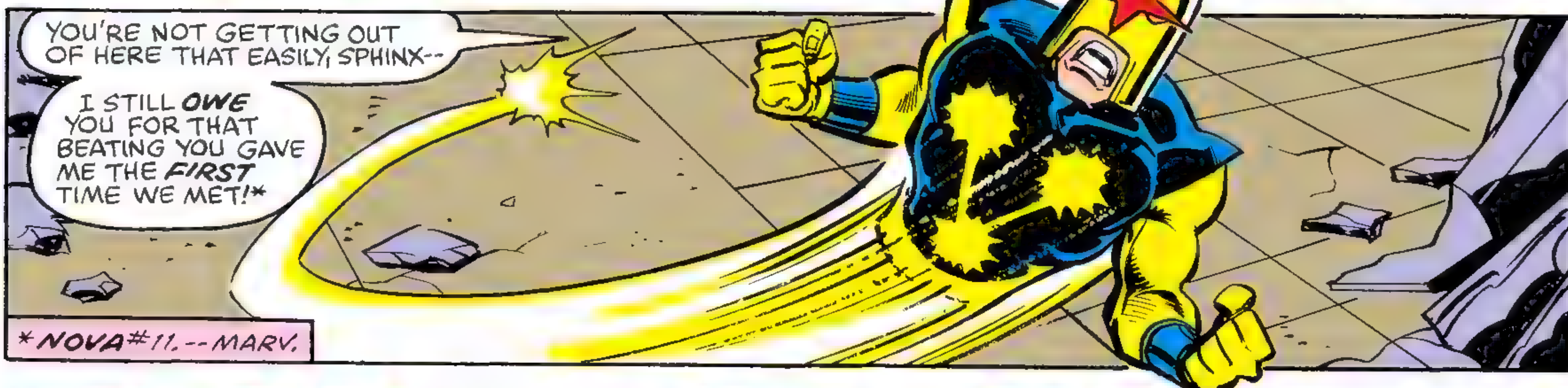
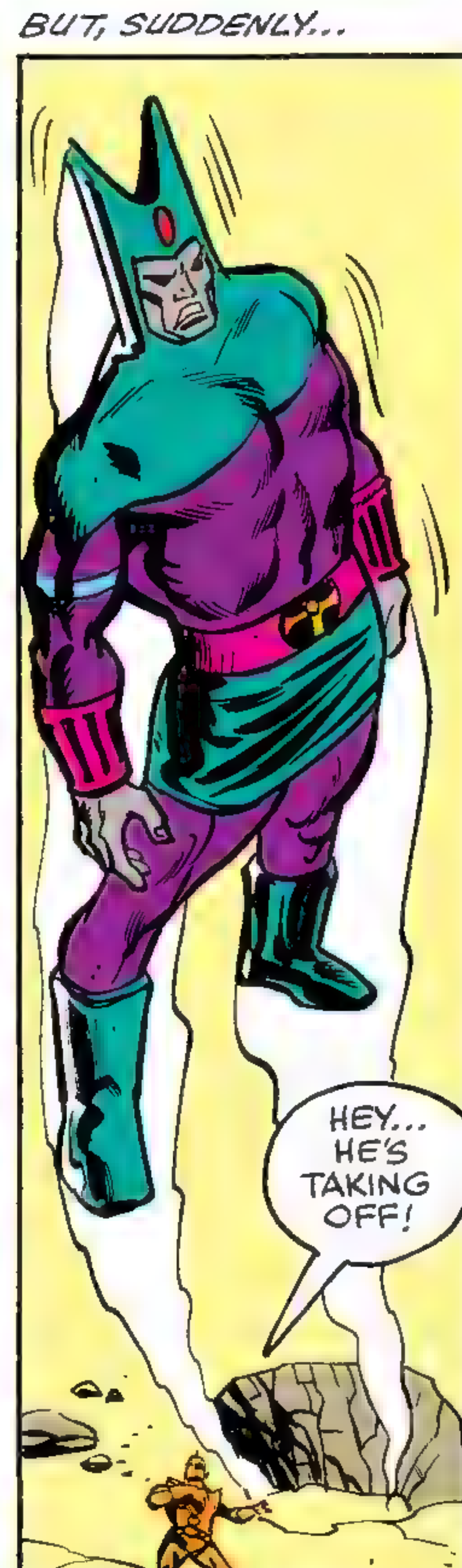
SUE? OH, MY HEAVEN-- HE'S STRUCK HER!

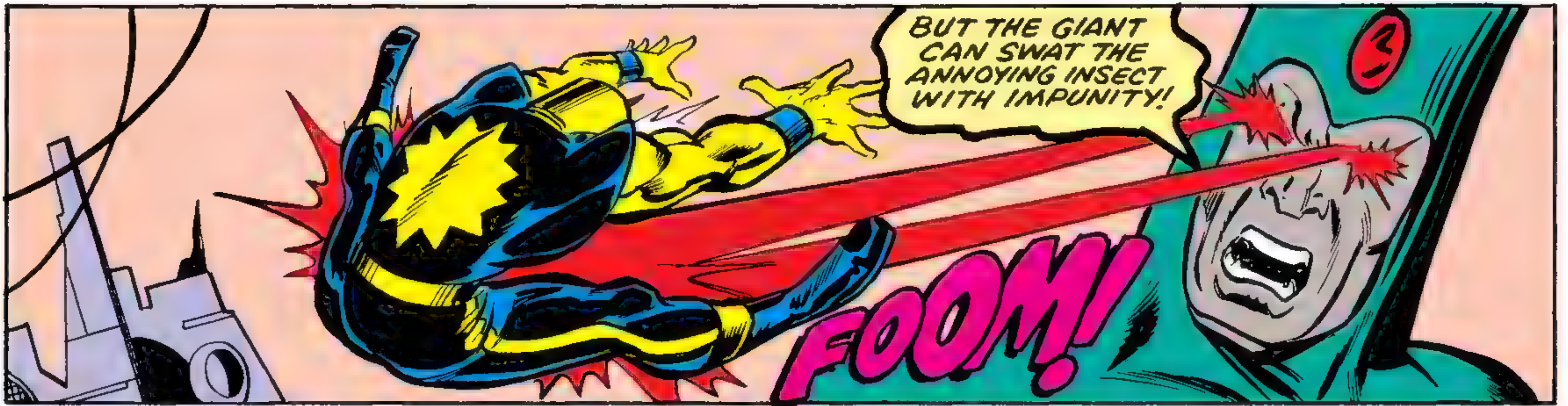
SHE'S NOT MOVING... CAN'T TELL IF SHE'S BREATHING...



SO HELP ME, SPHINX-- IF YOU'VE HARMED HER IN ANY WAY... IF YOU'VE CAUSED HER DEATH--

--NOTHING WILL STOP ME FROM DESTROYING YOU!





BUT THE GIANT
CAN SWAT THE
ANNOYING INSECT
WITH IMPUNITY!

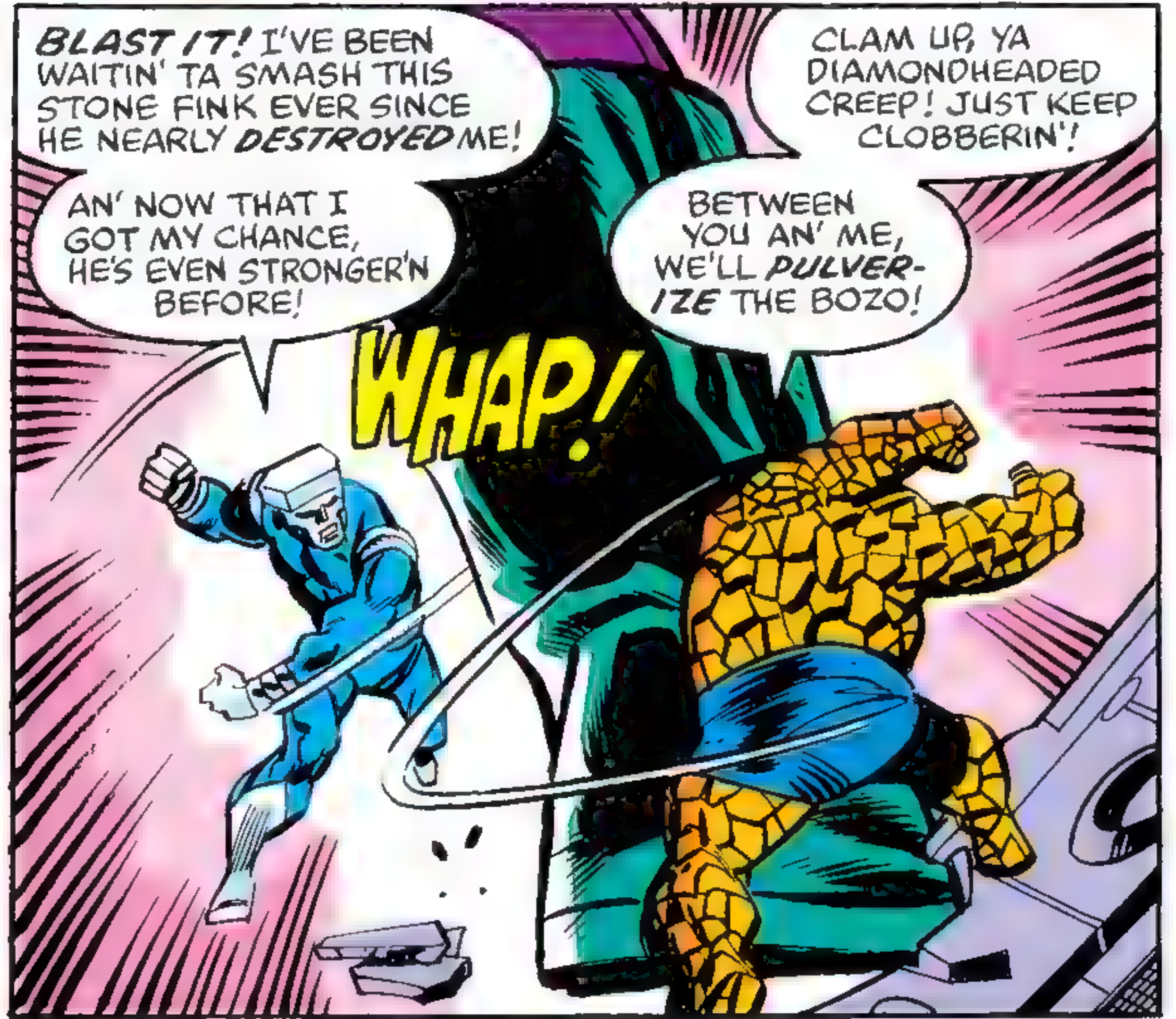
FOOM!



MEANWHILE, ON
THE GROUND...

EVEN MY ENERGY-
ABSORBING
POWERS AS A
SYPHON
WARRIOR
ARE USELESS
AGAINST THE
SPHINX!

HE'S TOO
POWERFUL...
EVEN FOR
POWERHOUSE!



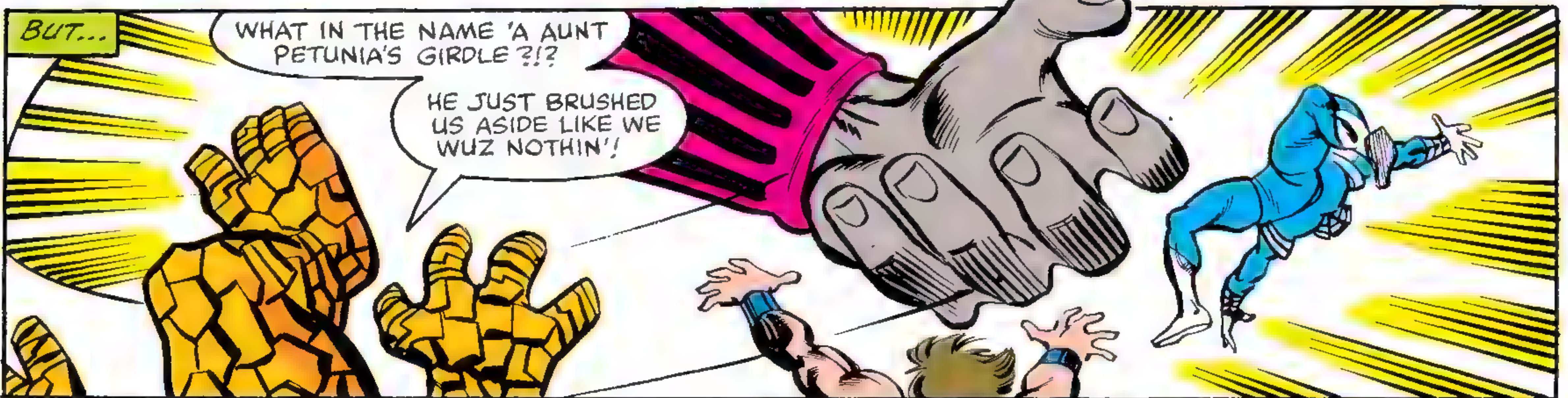
BLAST IT! I'VE BEEN
WAITIN' TA SMASH THIS
STONE FINK EVER SINCE
HE NEARLY DESTROYED ME!

AN' NOW THAT I
GOT MY CHANCE,
HE'S EVEN STRONGER'N
BEFORE!

CLAM UP, YA
DIAMONDHEADED
CREEP! JUST KEEP
CLOBBERIN'!

BETWEEN
YOU AN' ME,
WE'LL PULVER-
IZE THE BOZO!

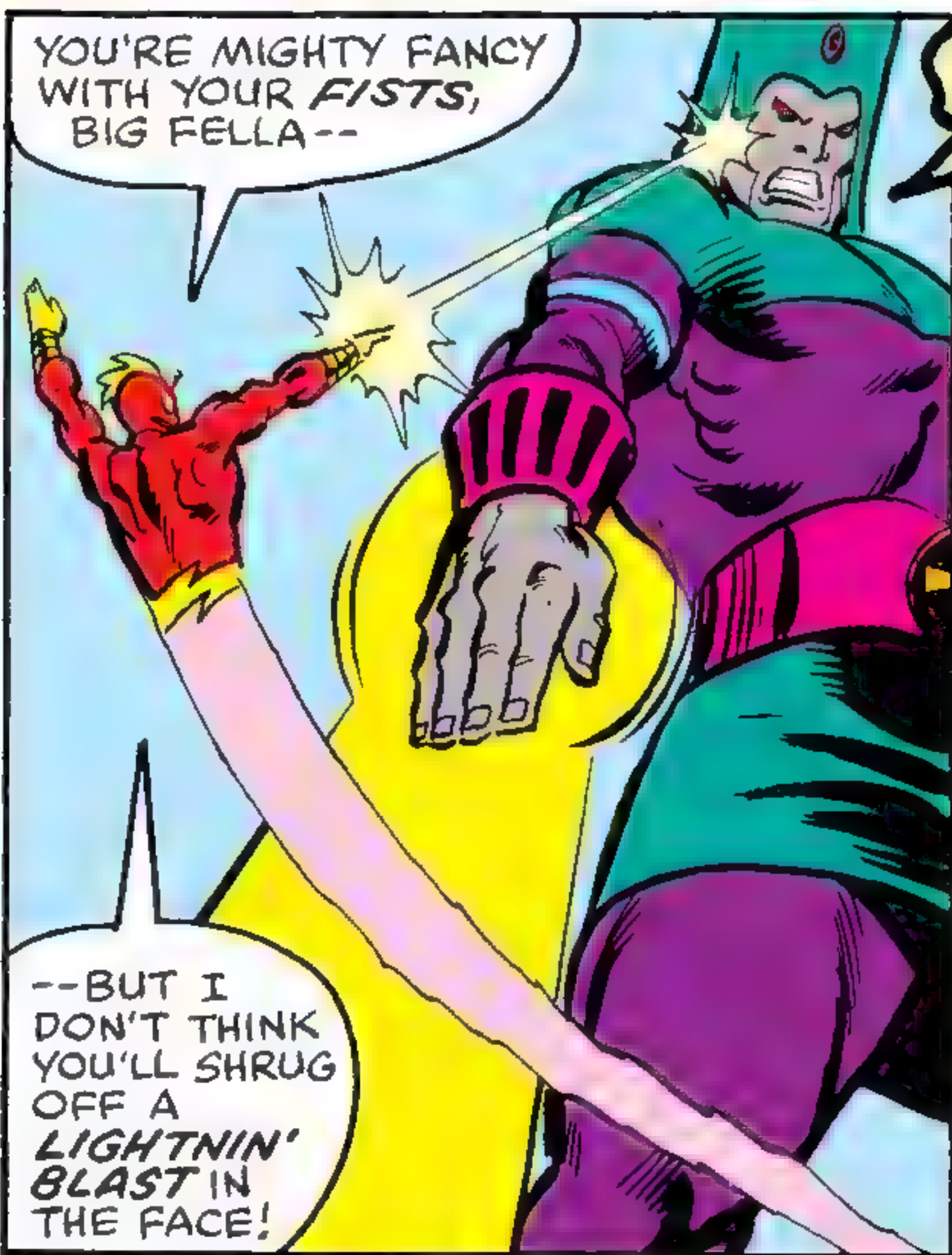
WHAP!



BUT...

WHAT IN THE NAME 'A AUNT
PETUNIA'S GIRDLE ???

HE JUST BRUSHED
US ASIDE LIKE WE
WUZ NOTHIN'!



YOU'RE MIGHTY FANCY
WITH YOUR FISTS,
BIG FELLA--

--BUT I
DON'T THINK
YOU'LL SHRUG
OFF A
LIGHTNIN'
BLAST IN
THE FACE!



COMET! YOUR FEEBLE ATTEMPTS
TO DESTROY ME ARE LUDICROUS!

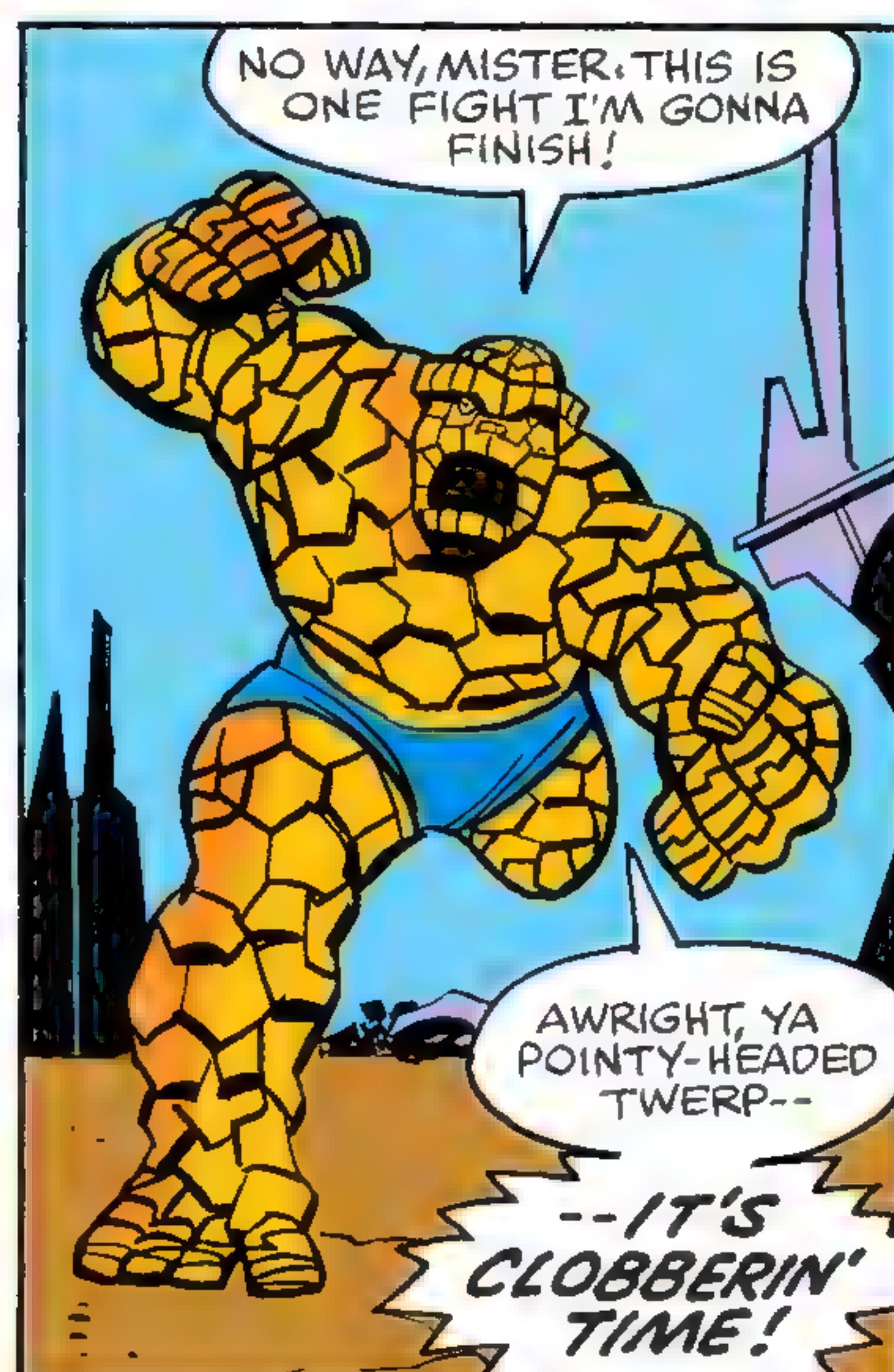
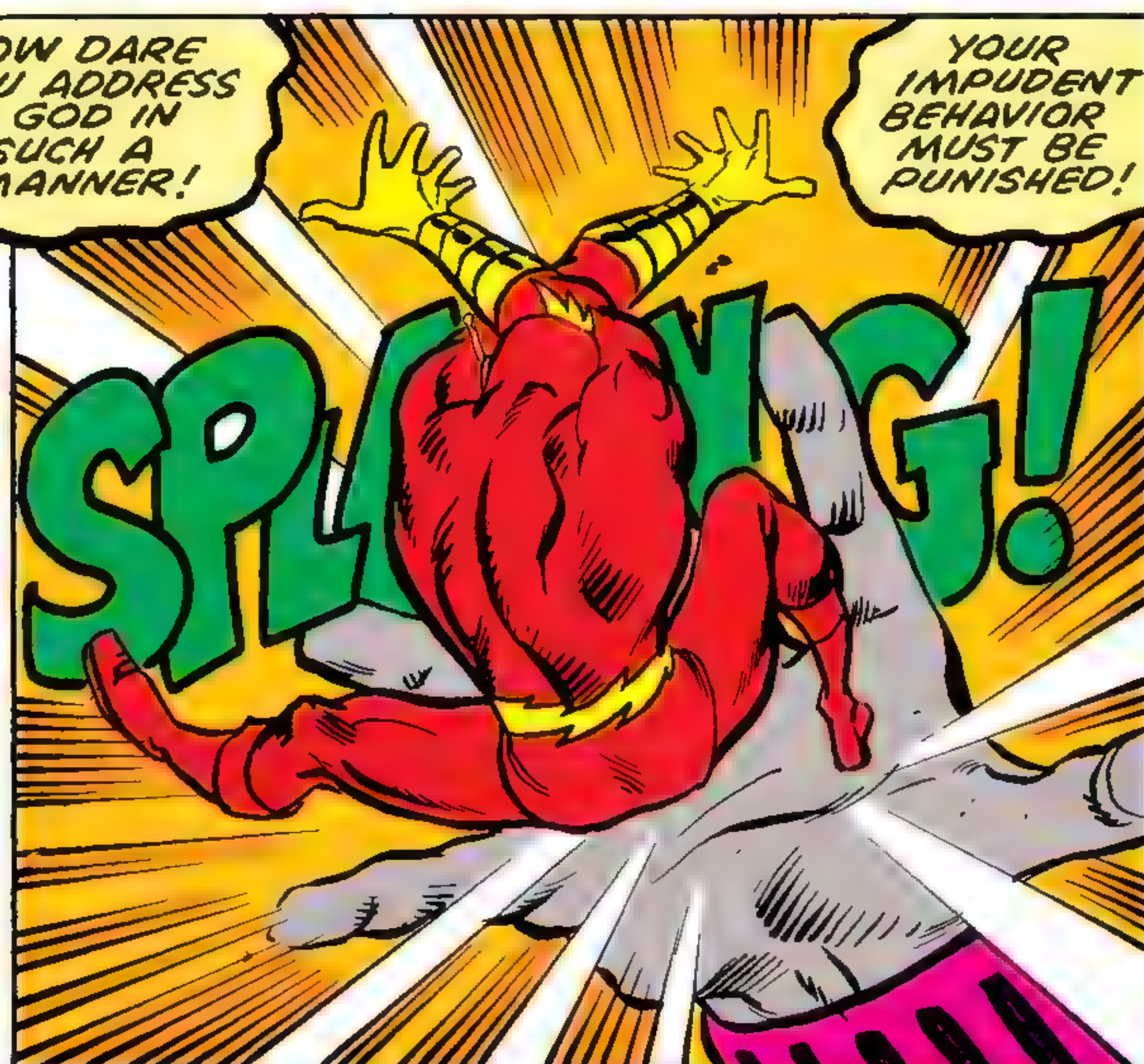
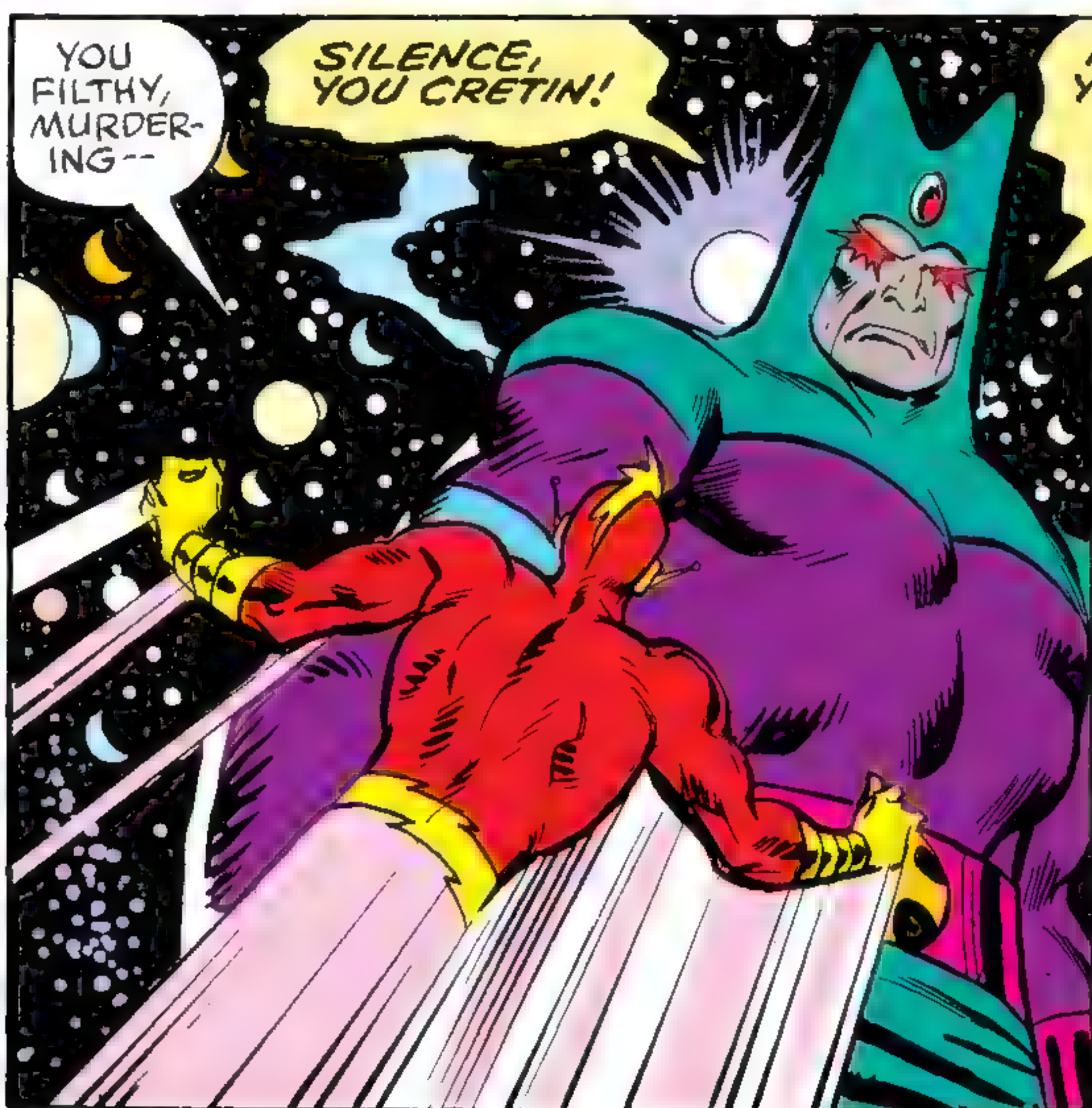
YOU
SHOULD
SPEND
YOUR TIME
LOOKING
AFTER YOUR
HAPLESS
SON!

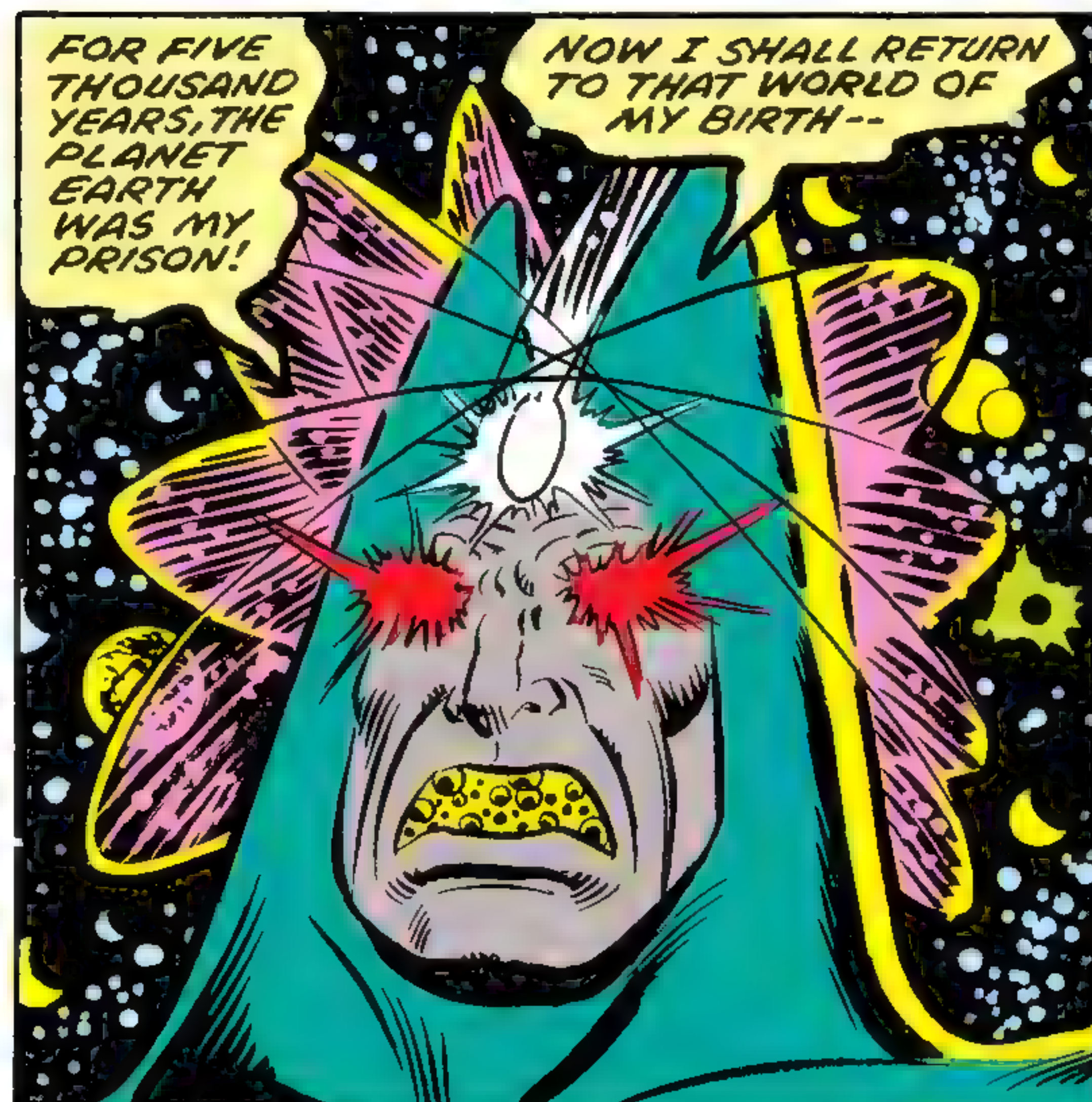
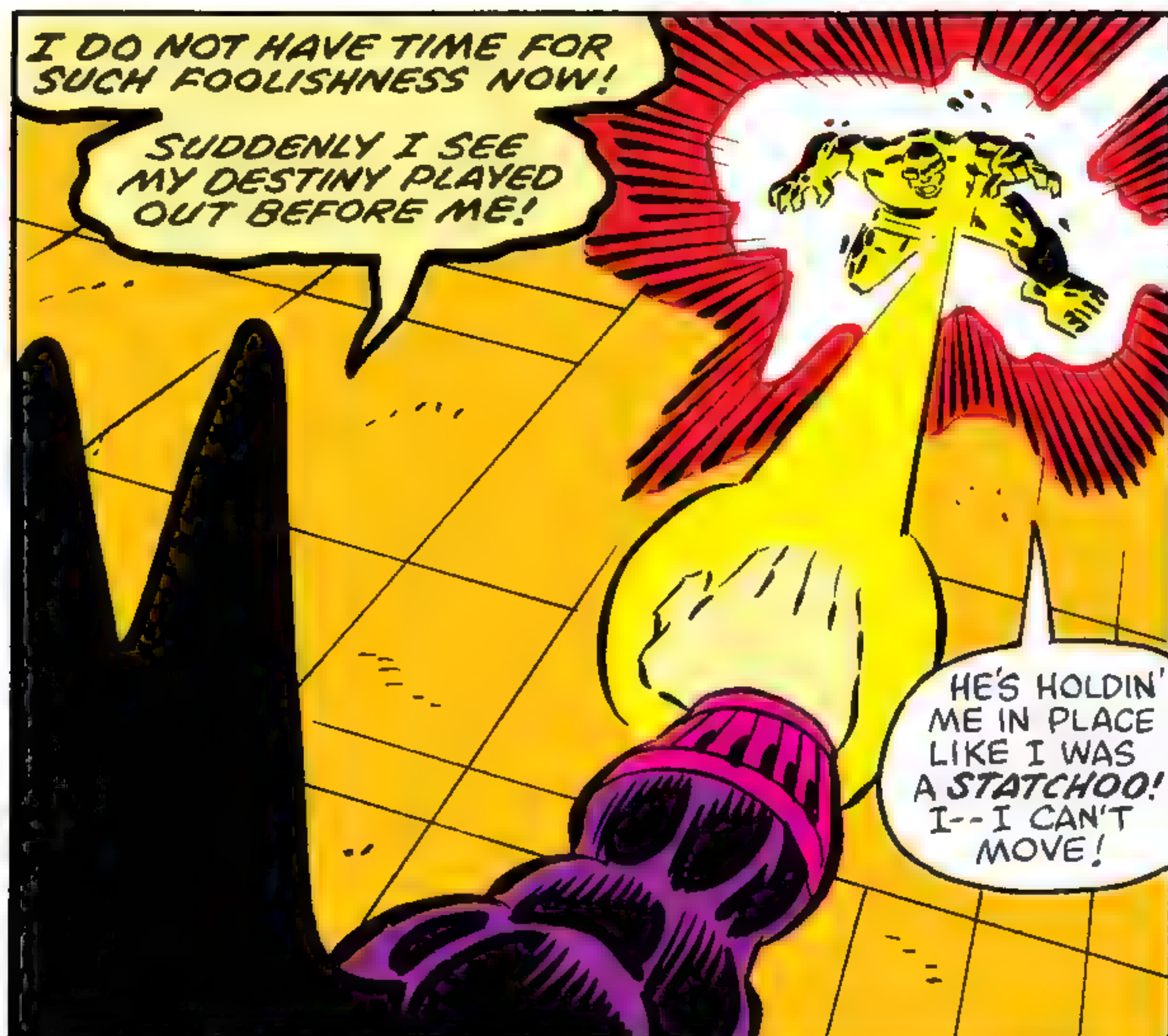
WHAMMO!



OH NO! WHAT
HAVE YOU DONE
TO HIM?

SON!





NEXT ISSUE: THE MOST SHOCKING NEW SUPPORTING CAST MEMBER OF ALL! ALSO: THE QUEST FOR GALACTUS BEGINS, BUT FIRST THE F.F. FIND THEMSELVES...

TRAPPED IN THE SARGASSO OF SPACE!

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

REED!
THOSE
TENTACLES--

--THEY'RE
**TEARIN' US
APART!**

THE F.F. ARE
REUNITED, BUT
THEIR JOY IS
SHORT-LIVED
WHEN THEY FIND
THEMSELVES...

**TRAPPED
IN THE
SARGASSO
OF SPACE!**

**INTRODUCING:
HEABIE
THE ROBOT!**

**BEWARE! HE'S NOT WHAT
HE SEEMS TO BE!**

Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**®

MARV WOLFGAN
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ILLUSTRATORS

TOM ORZECOWSKI
letterer

GLYNIS WEIN
colorist

JIM SHOOTER
CONSULTANT

THE FABULOUS F.F. BATTLE FOR THEIR LIVES EVEN AS THEY FIND THEMSELVES--

TRAPPED IN THE SARGASSO OF SPACE!

WHAT'S GOING
ON--?

SIMPLY PUT, THE
FANTASTIC FOUR
AND THE ALL-NEW
CHAMPIONS
PAUSE IN THEIR
BATTLE WITH
THE GREAT
SKRULL EMPIRE...

SO THAT'S
WHAT YOU'RE
BUILDING TO
HELP US FIND
GALACTUS. NO
WONDER YOU
WERE SO
SECRETIVE!

TELL ME
YER JOKIN',
STRETCH. TELL
ME YER PULLIN'
MY BIG,
ORANGE LEG!

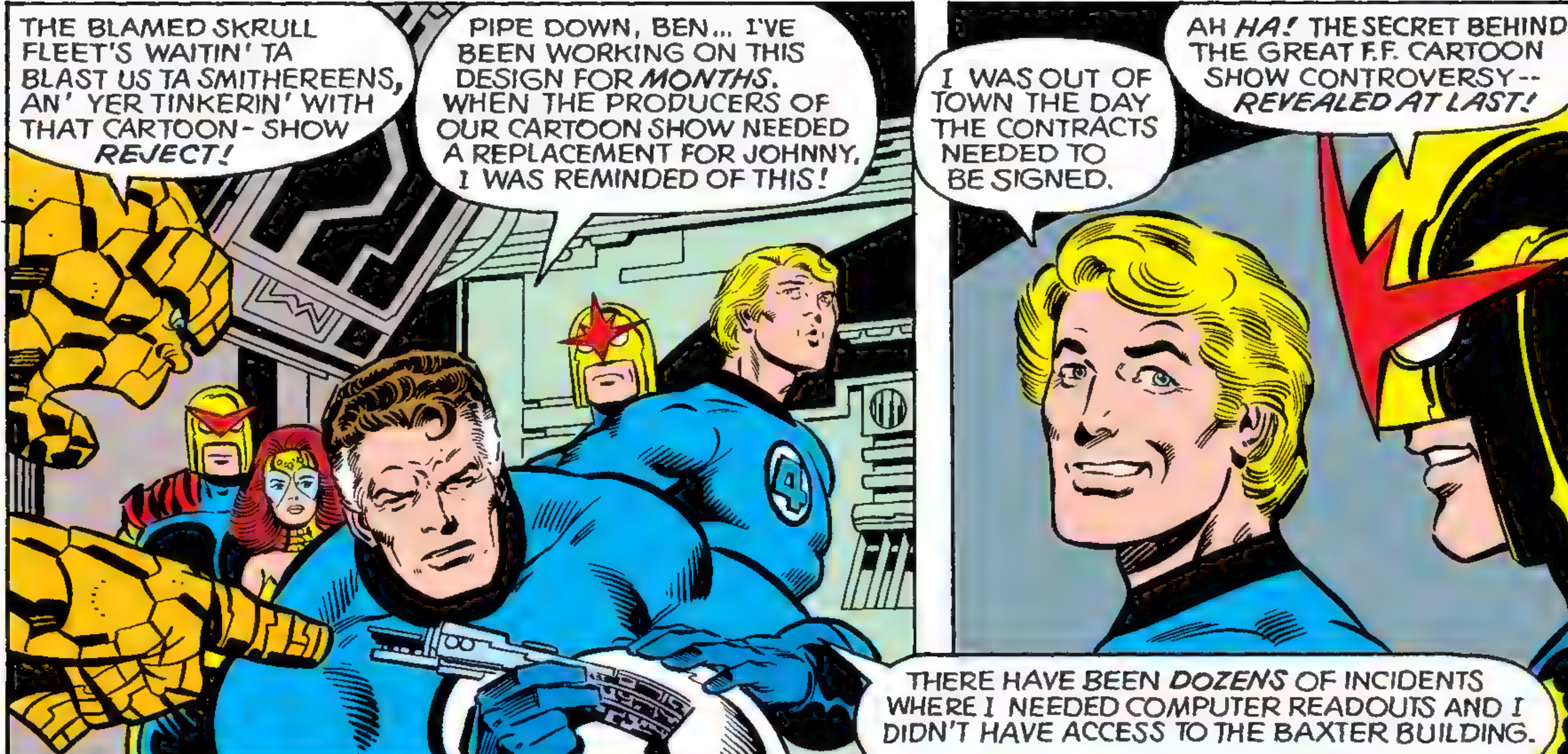
OF ALL THE
HAIR-BRAINED
STUNTS YA EVER
PULLED, THIS
ONE'S GOTTA TAKE
THE CAKE.

IT'S A
BIZARRE
LOOKING
CREATION.
WHAT
IS IT?

HE LOOKS
CORNIER
IN PERSON
THAN HE
DOES ON
THE TUBE.



LG465



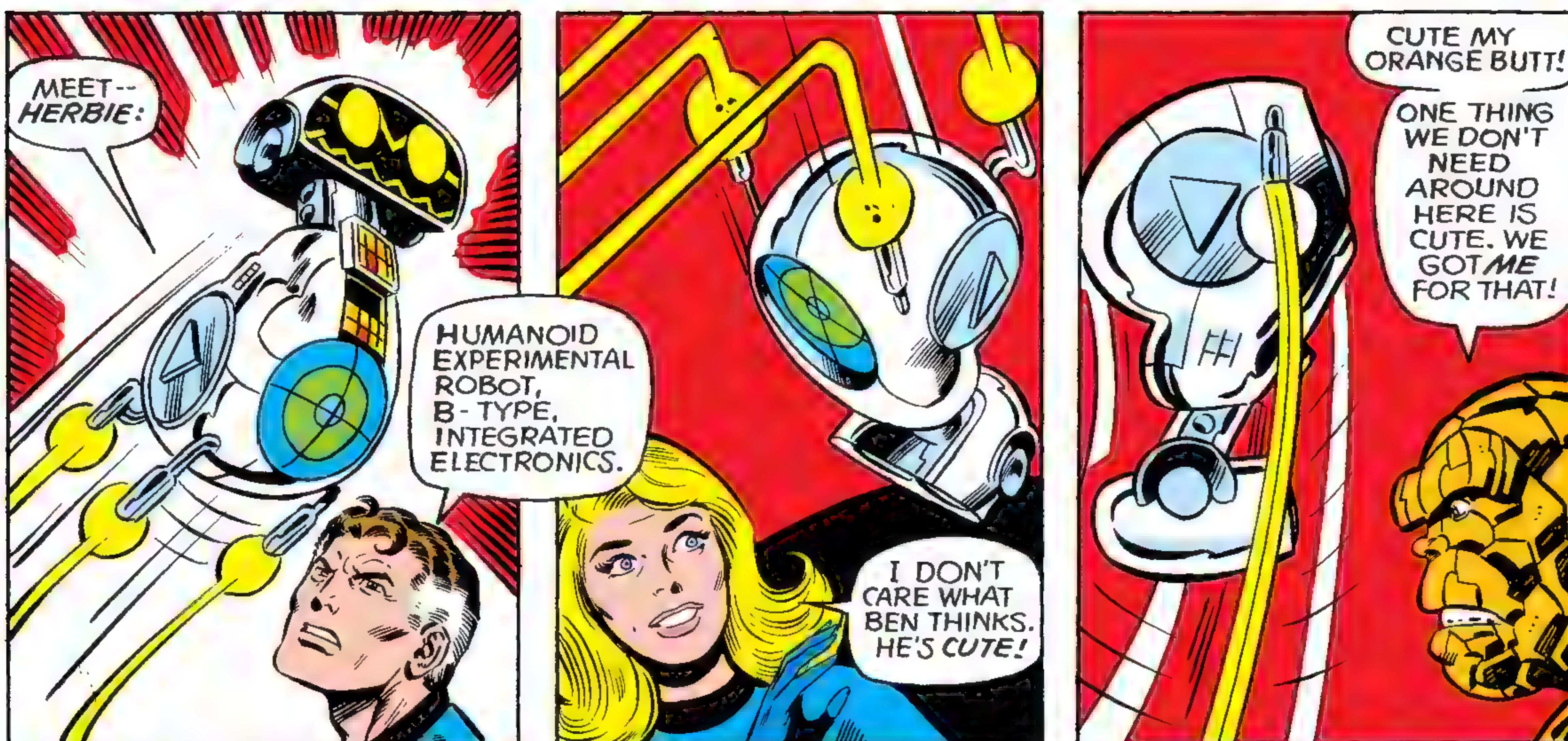
THE BLAMED SKRULL FLEET'S WAITIN' TA BLAST US TA SMITHEREENS, AN' YER TINKERIN' WITH THAT CARTOON - SHOW REJECT!

PIPE DOWN, BEN... I'VE BEEN WORKING ON THIS DESIGN FOR MONTHS. WHEN THE PRODUCERS OF OUR CARTOON SHOW NEEDED A REPLACEMENT FOR JOHNNY, I WAS REMINDED OF THIS!

I WAS OUT OF TOWN THE DAY THE CONTRACTS NEEDED TO BE SIGNED.

AH HA! THE SECRET BEHIND THE GREAT F.F. CARTOON SHOW CONTROVERSY -- REVEALED AT LAST!

THERE HAVE BEEN *DOZENS* OF INCIDENTS WHERE I NEEDED COMPUTER READOUTS AND I DIDN'T HAVE ACCESS TO THE BAXTER BUILDING.



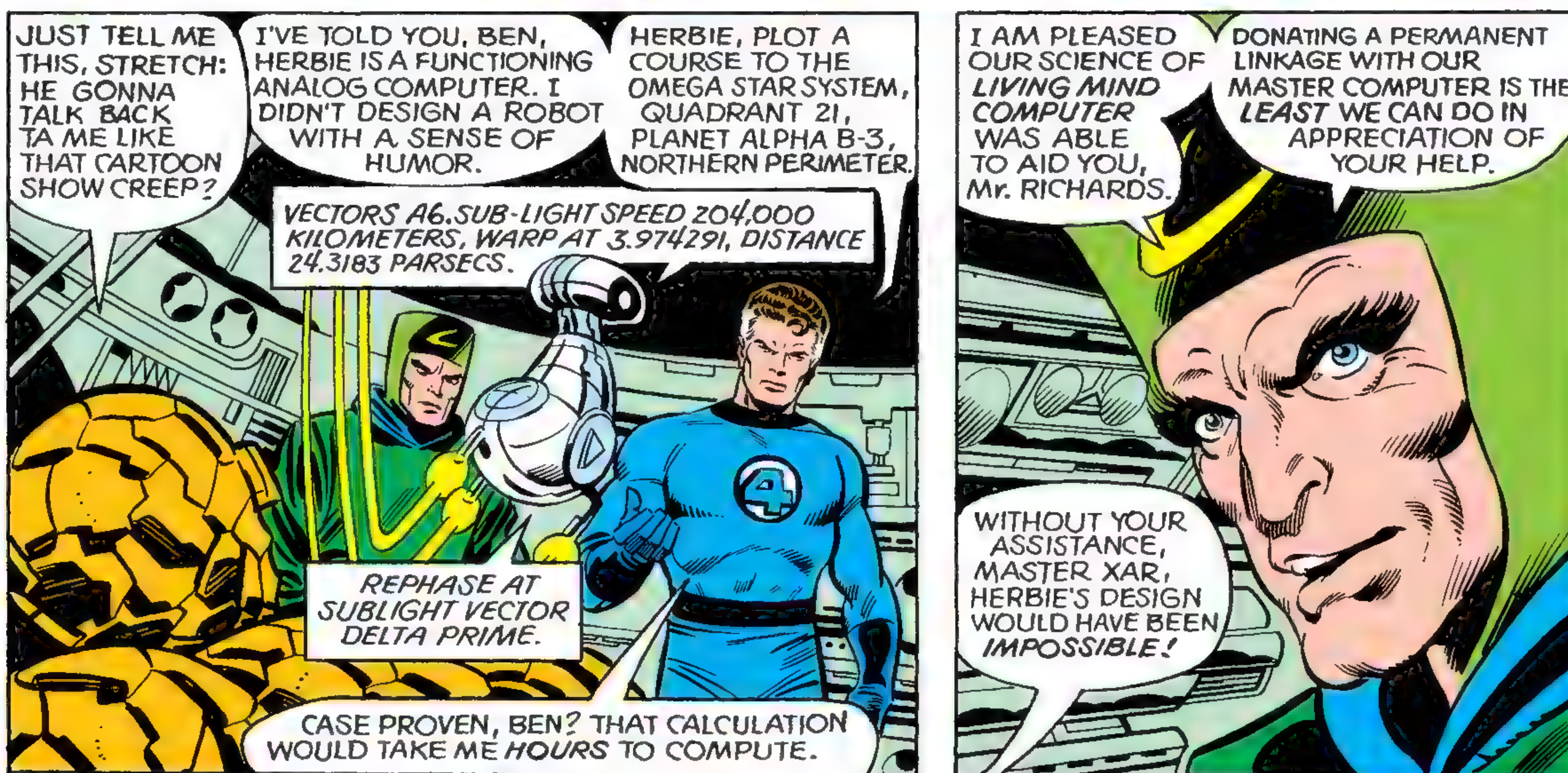
MEET -- HERBIE:

HUMANOID EXPERIMENTAL ROBOT, B-TYPE, INTEGRATED ELECTRONICS.

I DON'T CARE WHAT BEN THINKS. HE'S CUTE!

CUTE MY ORANGE BUTT!

ONE THING WE DON'T NEED AROUND HERE IS CUTE. WE GOT *ME* FOR THAT!



JUST TELL ME THIS, STRETCH: HE GONNA TALK BACK TA ME LIKE THAT CARTOON SHOW CREEP?

I'VE TOLD YOU, BEN, HERBIE IS A FUNCTIONING ANALOG COMPUTER. I DIDN'T DESIGN A ROBOT WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR.

HERBIE, PLOT A COURSE TO THE OMEGA STAR SYSTEM, QUADRANT 21, PLANET ALPHA B-3, NORTHERN PERIMETER.

VECTORS A6.SUB-LIGHT SPEED 204,000 KILOMETERS, WARP AT 3.974291, DISTANCE 24.3183 PARSECS.

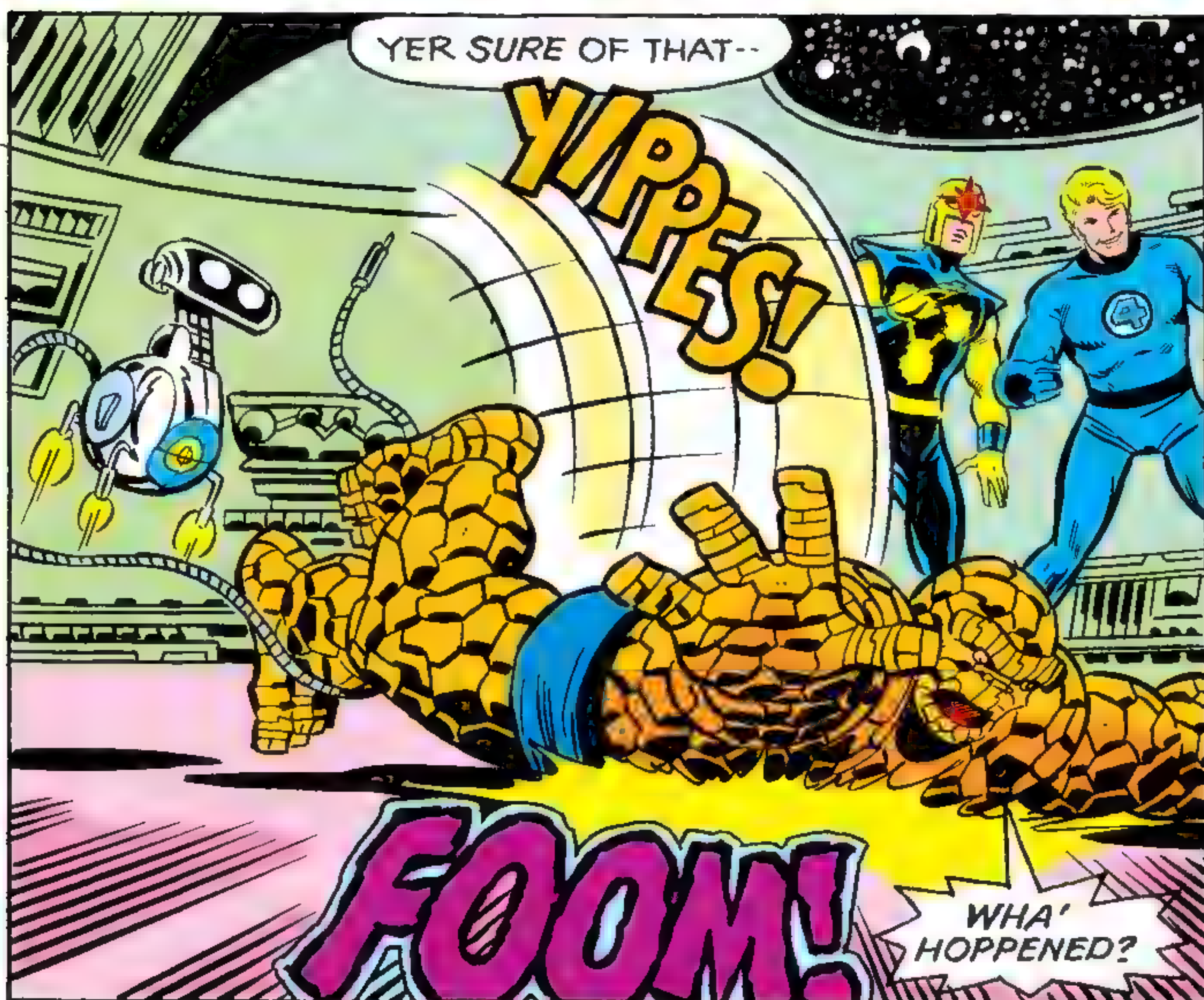
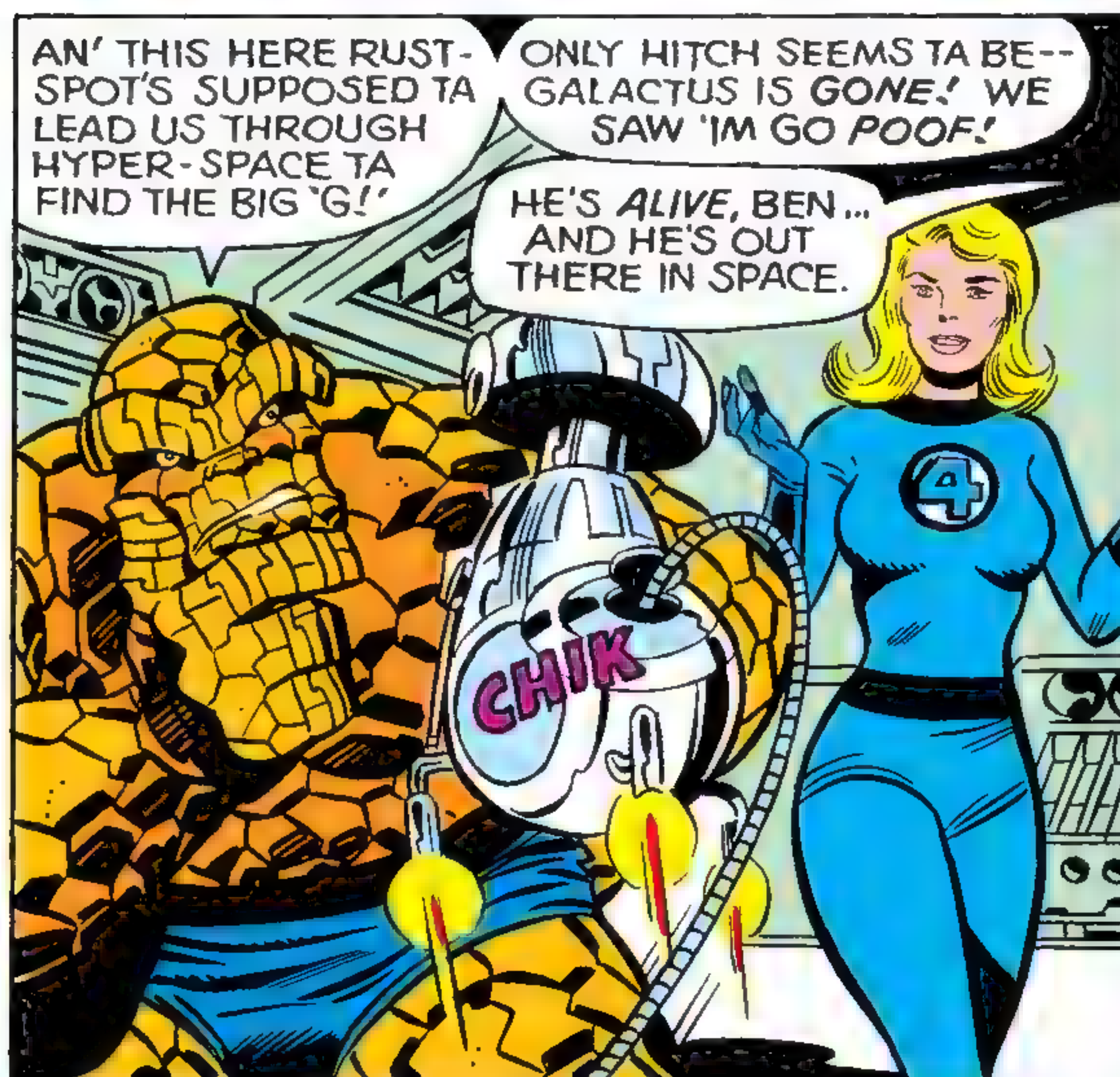
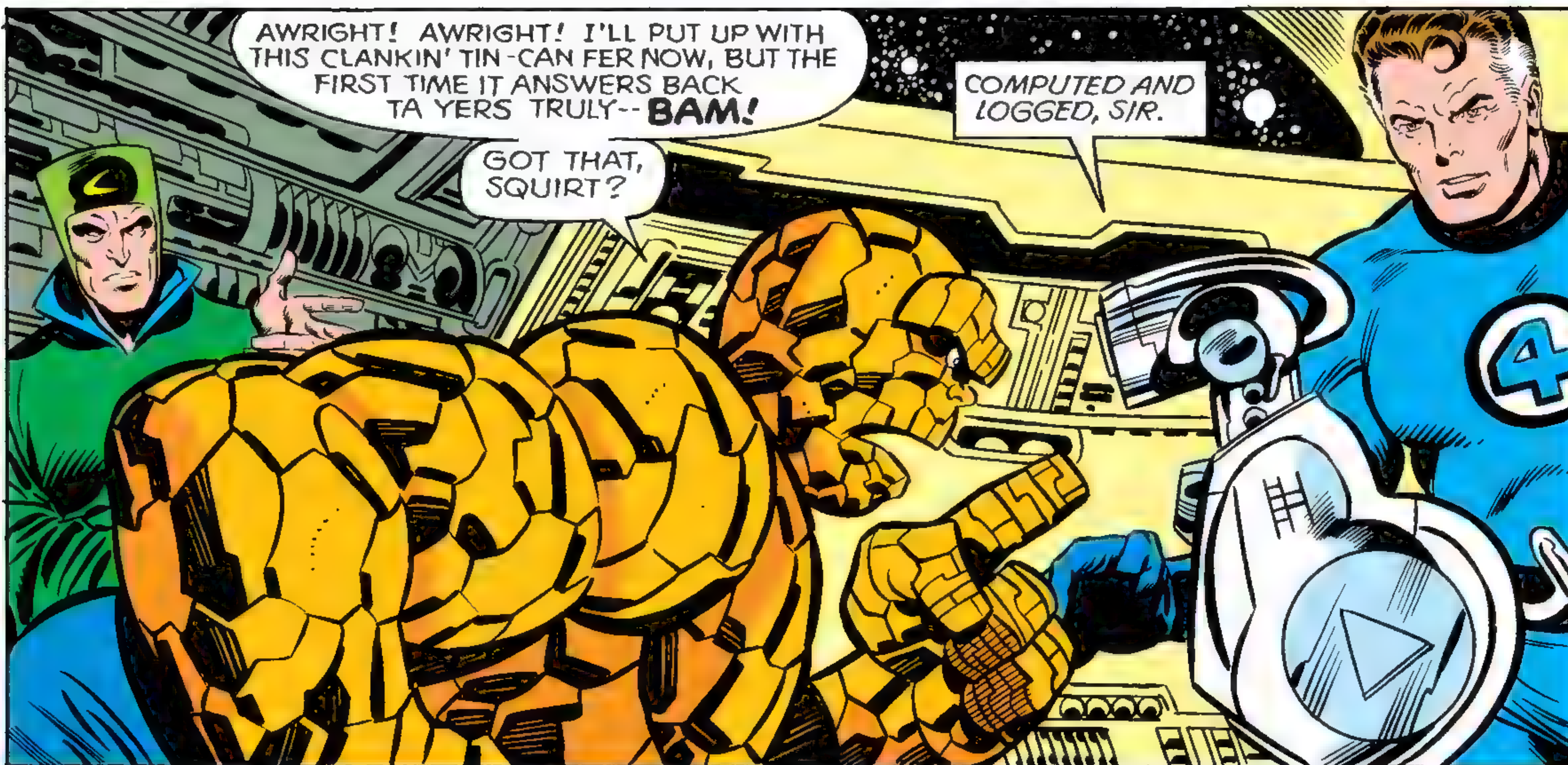
REPHASE AT SUBLIGHT VECTOR DELTA PRIME.

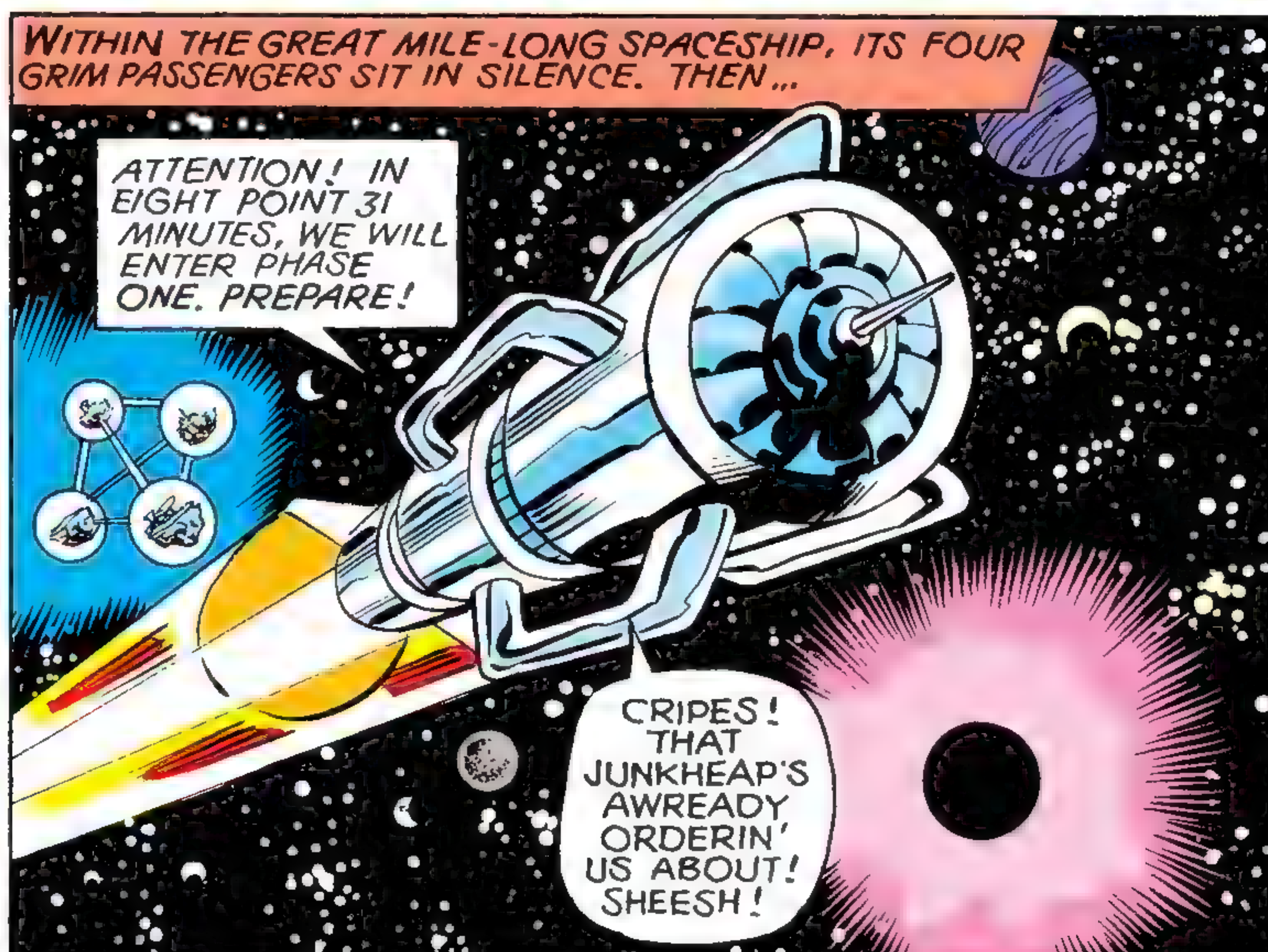
CASE PROVEN, BEN? THAT CALCULATION WOULD TAKE ME *HOURS* TO COMPUTE.

I AM PLEASED OUR SCIENCE OF *LIVING MIND* COMPUTER WAS ABLE TO AID YOU, Mr. RICHARDS.

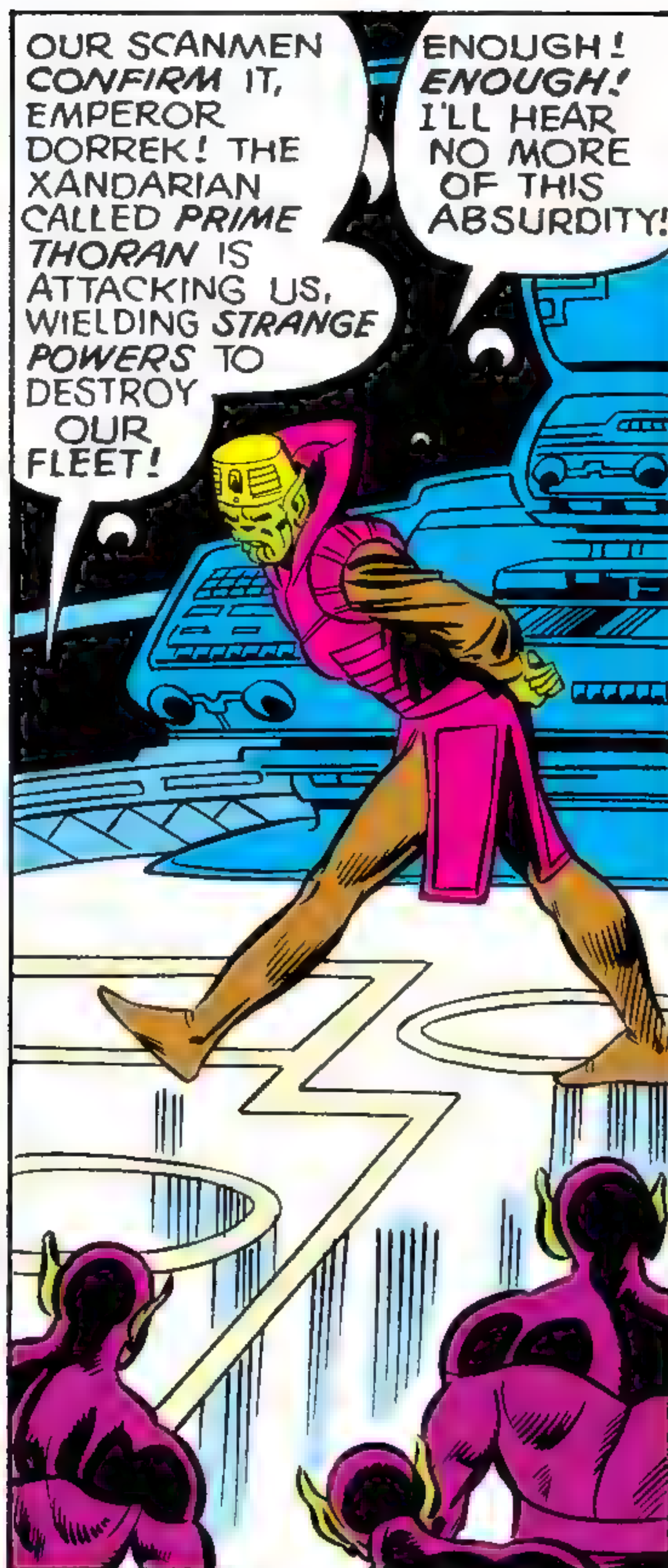
DONATING A PERMANENT LINKAGE WITH OUR MASTER COMPUTER IS THE *LEAST* WE CAN DO IN APPRECIATION OF YOUR HELP.

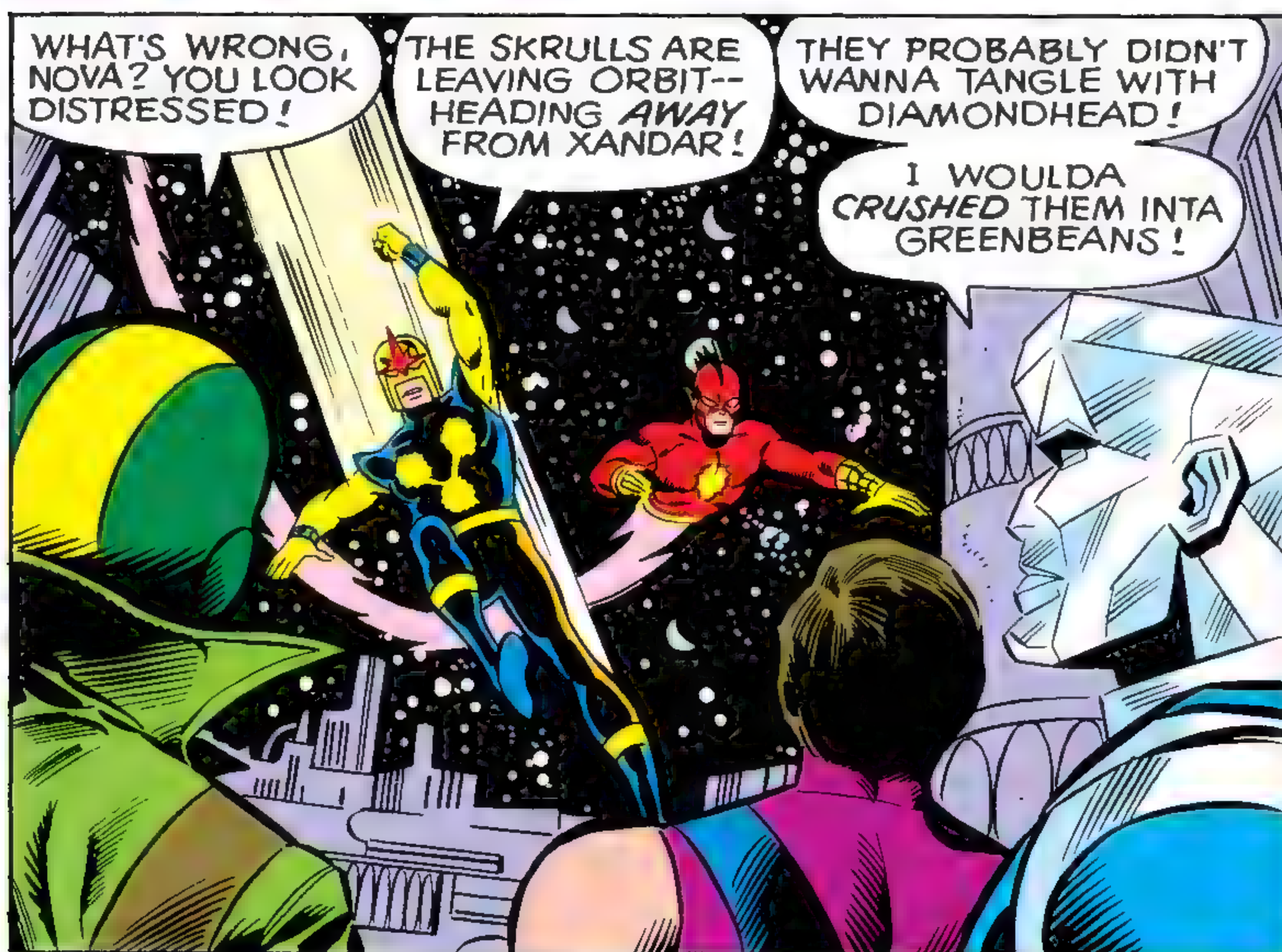
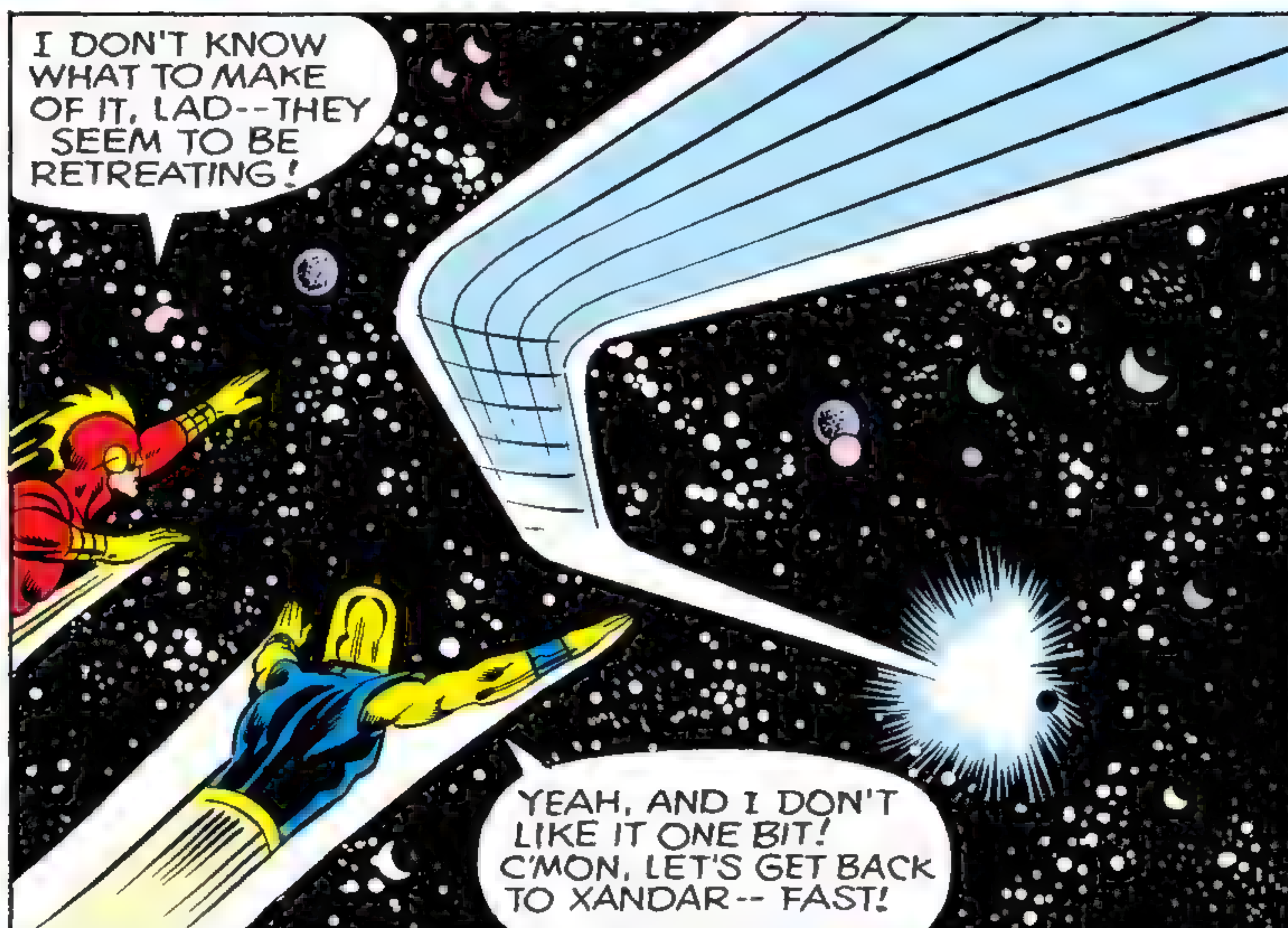
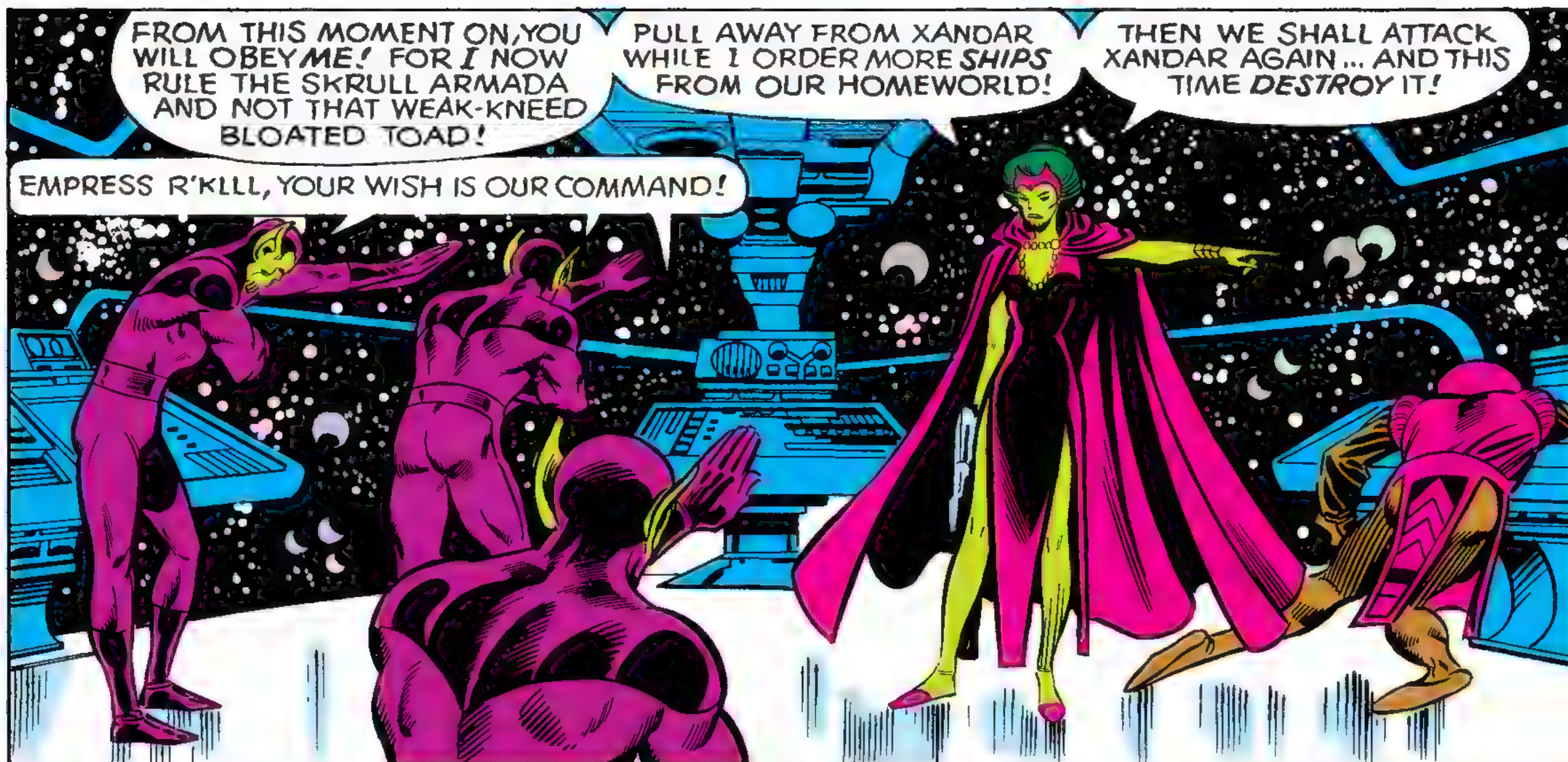
WITHOUT YOUR ASSISTANCE, MASTER XAR, HERBIE'S DESIGN WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE!



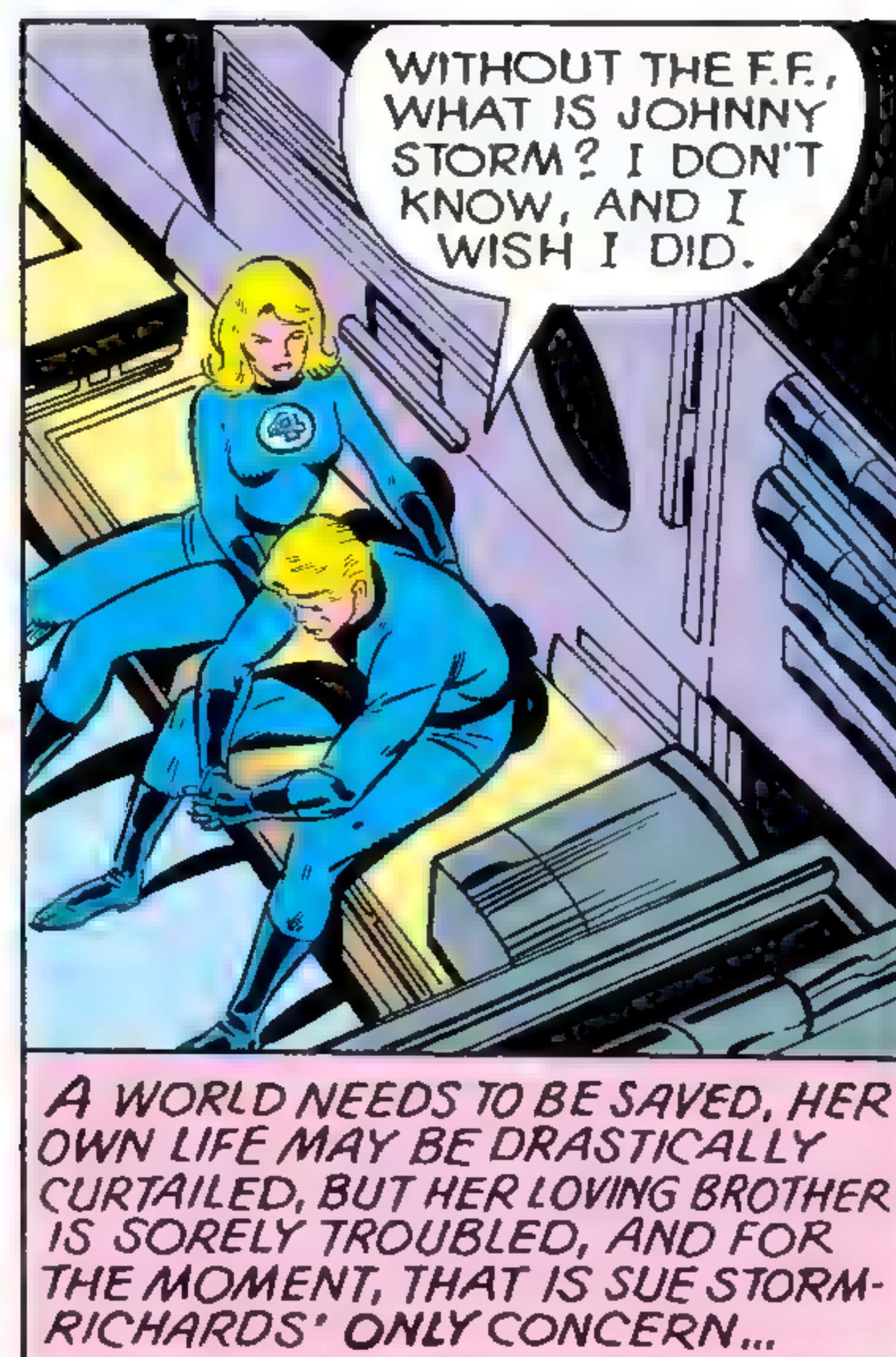
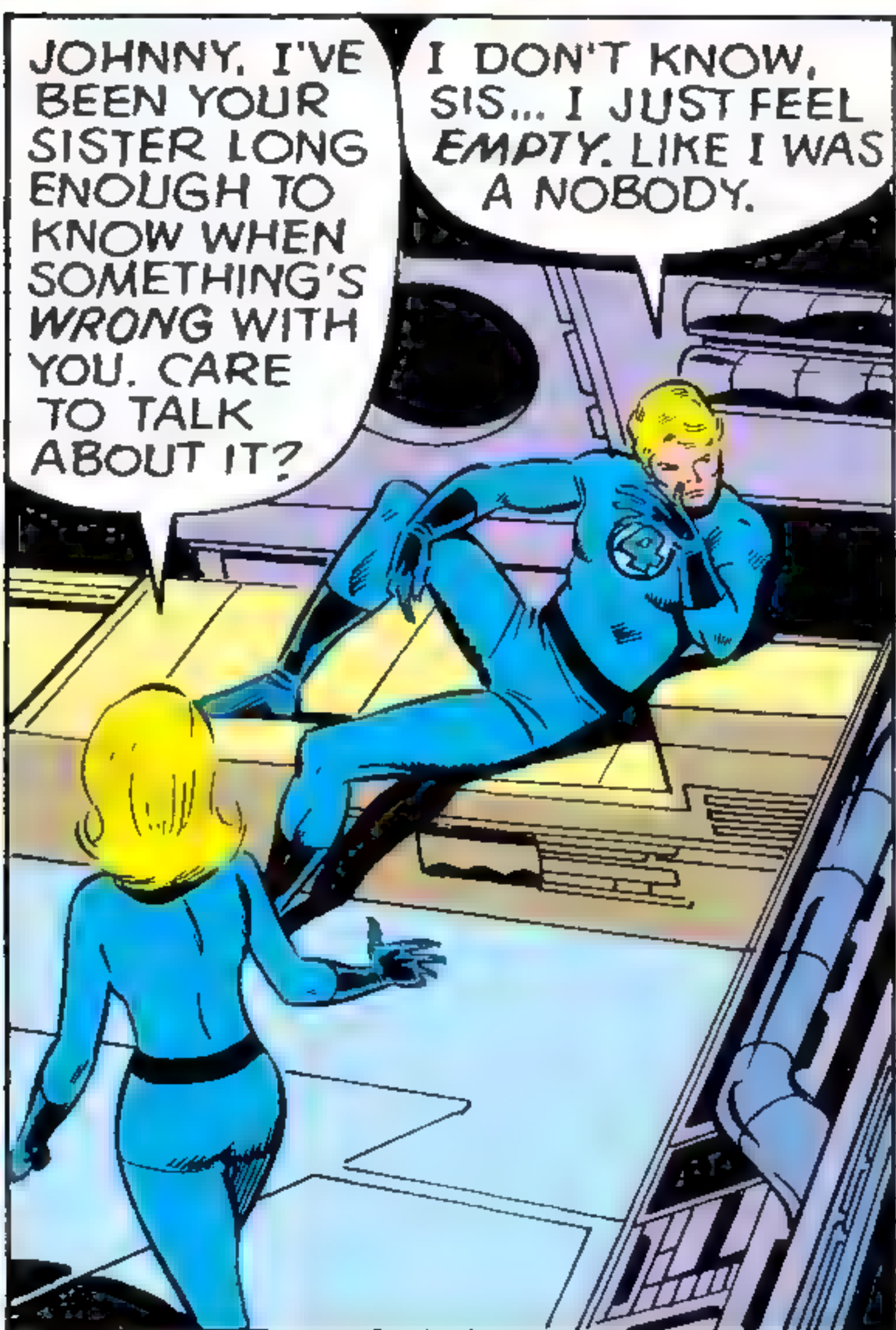
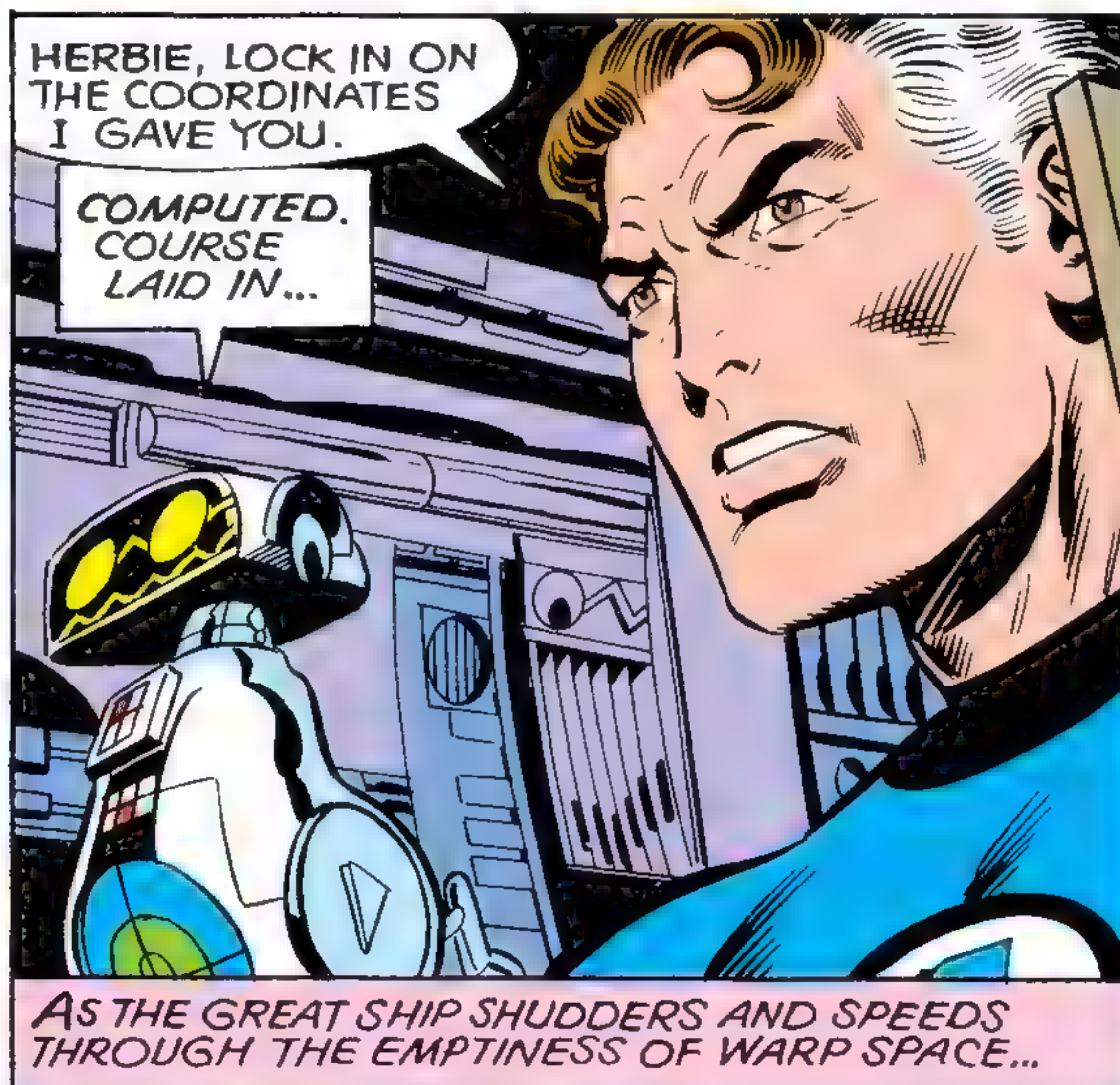
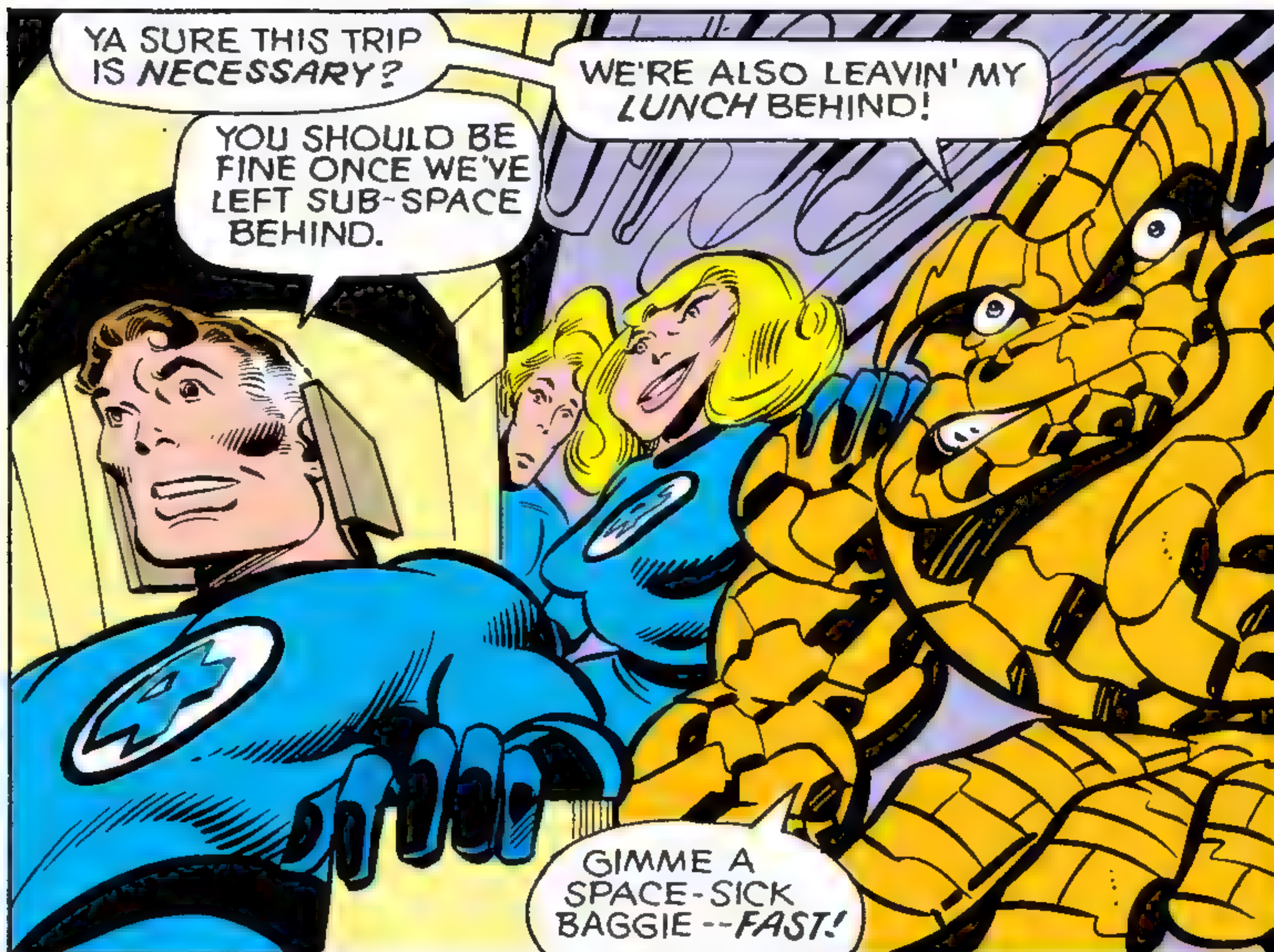


MEANWHILE, IN SPACE, ABOARD THE LEAD SKRULL WARSHIP...





FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE LEAVE OF XANDAR AND LOOK IN ON THE STARS OF OUR MAG AS THEY PREPARE TO ENTER WARP DRIVE...



MEANWHILE...

SICK'A TRUCKIN' ACROSS THE UNIVERSE. I AIN'T SEEN ALICIA IN WEEKS!

AN' ONLY SHE CAN KEEP ME FROM REMEMBERIN' I'M A ROCK-SKINNED MONSTER!

DON'T MATTER HOW LONG IT'S BEEN, 'CAUSE WHENEVER I LOOK AT MY MUG IN A MIRROR--

-- I KNOW IT AIN'T THE FACE I WAS BORN WITH!

I DON'T COMPLAIN LIKE I USED TA... I HADDA RESIGN TA LIVIN' IN A BODY WHAT LOOKS LIKE A BRICK OUTHOUSE...

BUT I DON'T HAFTA LIKE IT! I DON'T HAFTA LIKE IT ONE BIT!

WOK!

YOU BIG, ORANGE BOZO, YOU COULD'VE RIPPED A HOLE THROUGH THE WALL.

C'MON NOW, MOVE! DIDN'T YOU HEAR REED'S EMERGENCY SIGNAL?

FOOM!

KID, STRETCHO SOUNDS THE ALARM EVERYTIME HE STUBS HIS LITTLE TOE!

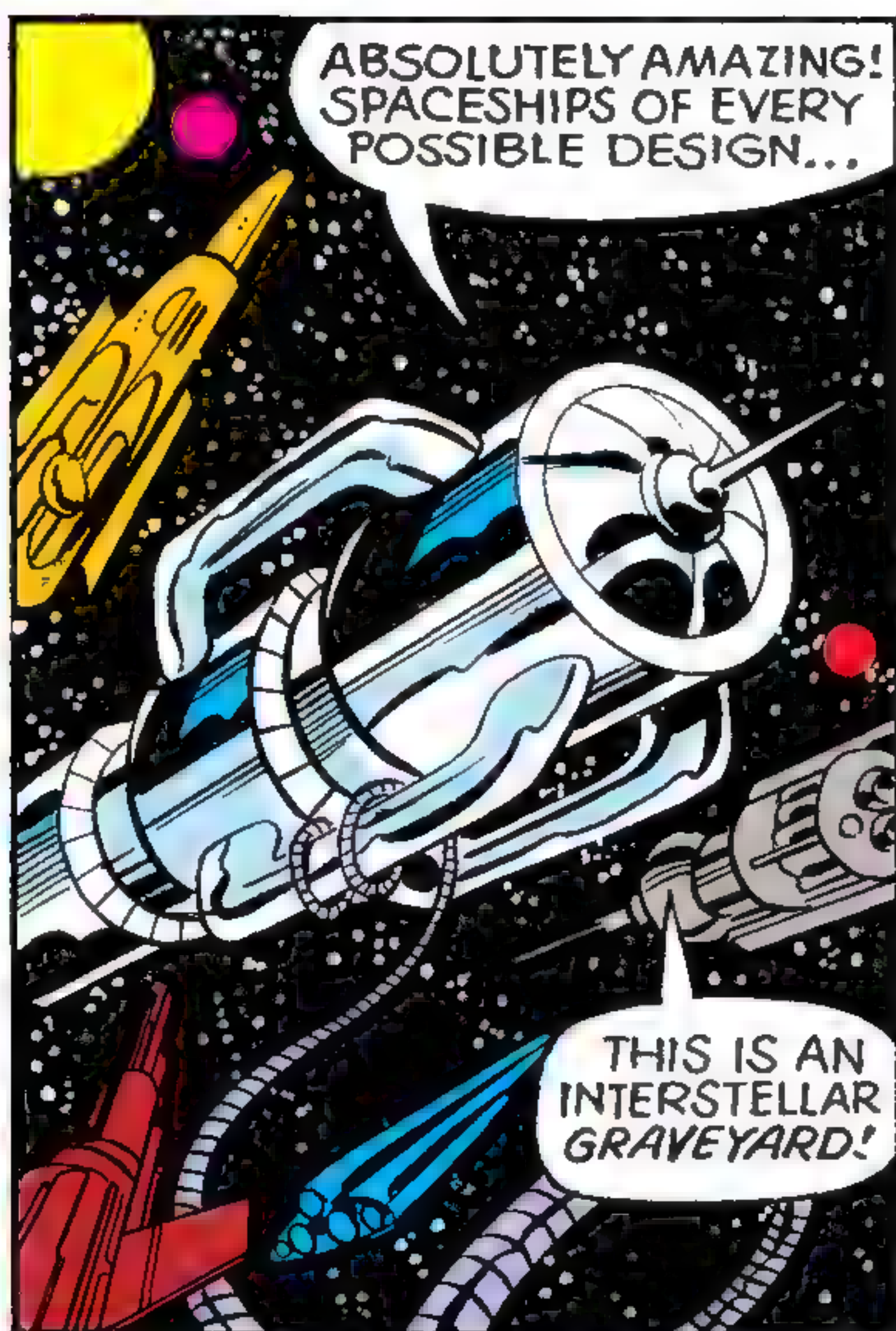
YOU OUGHTTA KNOW HIS WARNIN'S DON'T MEAN A HAIRY HANKY!

IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU TWO GOT HERE... LOOK AT THE VIEWSCREEN!

HOLY HANNAH! IT LOOKS LIKE THE LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY OF SPACE!

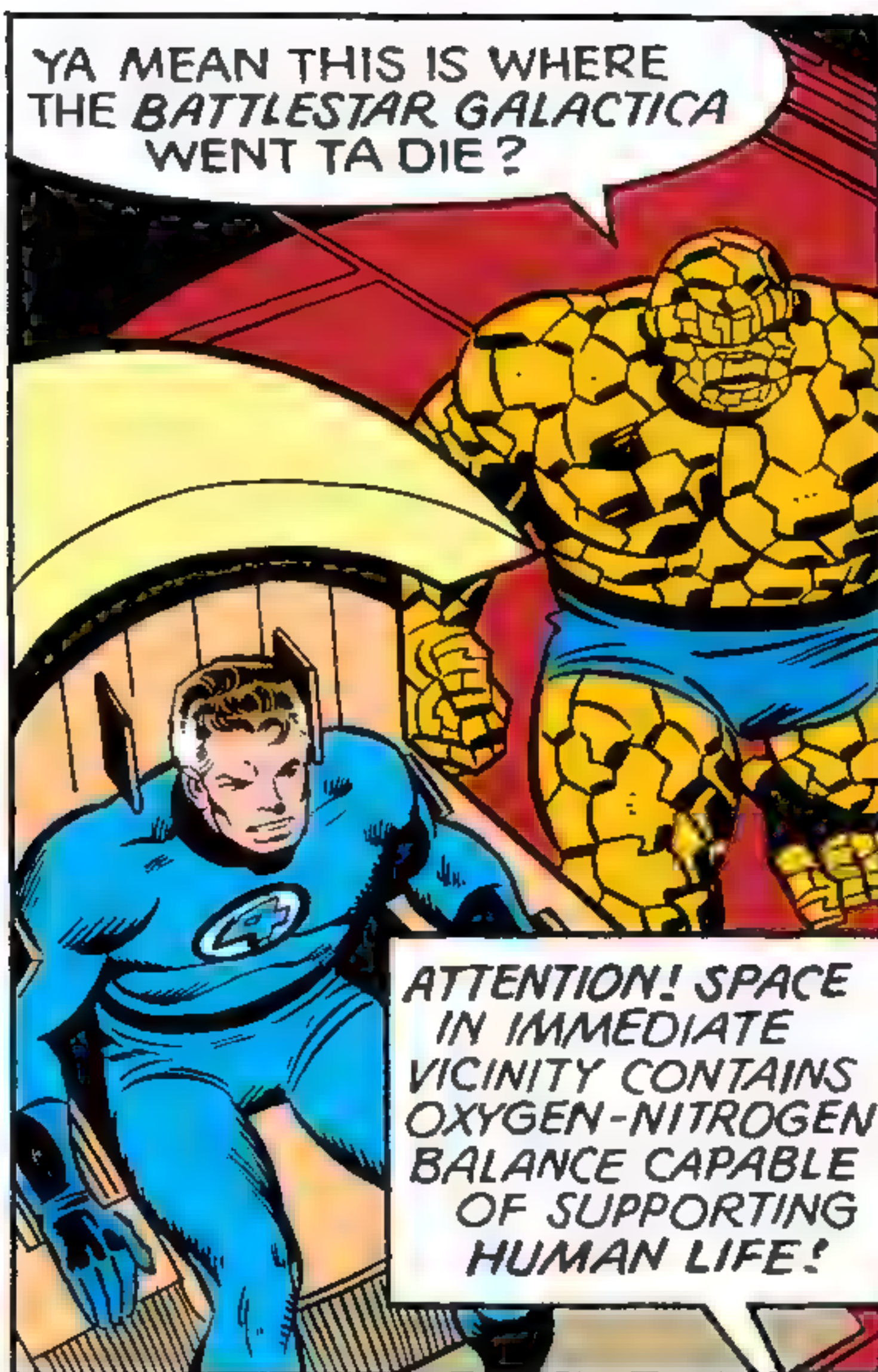
MILLIONS 'A SHIPS... AN' NOTHIN'S MOVIN'!

THE SKRULLS HAVE ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT A SARGASSO OF SPACE. THIS MUST BE IT!



**ABSOLUTELY AMAZING!
SPACESHIPS OF EVERY
POSSIBLE DESIGN...**

THIS IS AN
INTERSTELLAR
GRAVEYARD!



YA MEAN THIS IS WHERE
THE *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA*
WENT TA DIE?

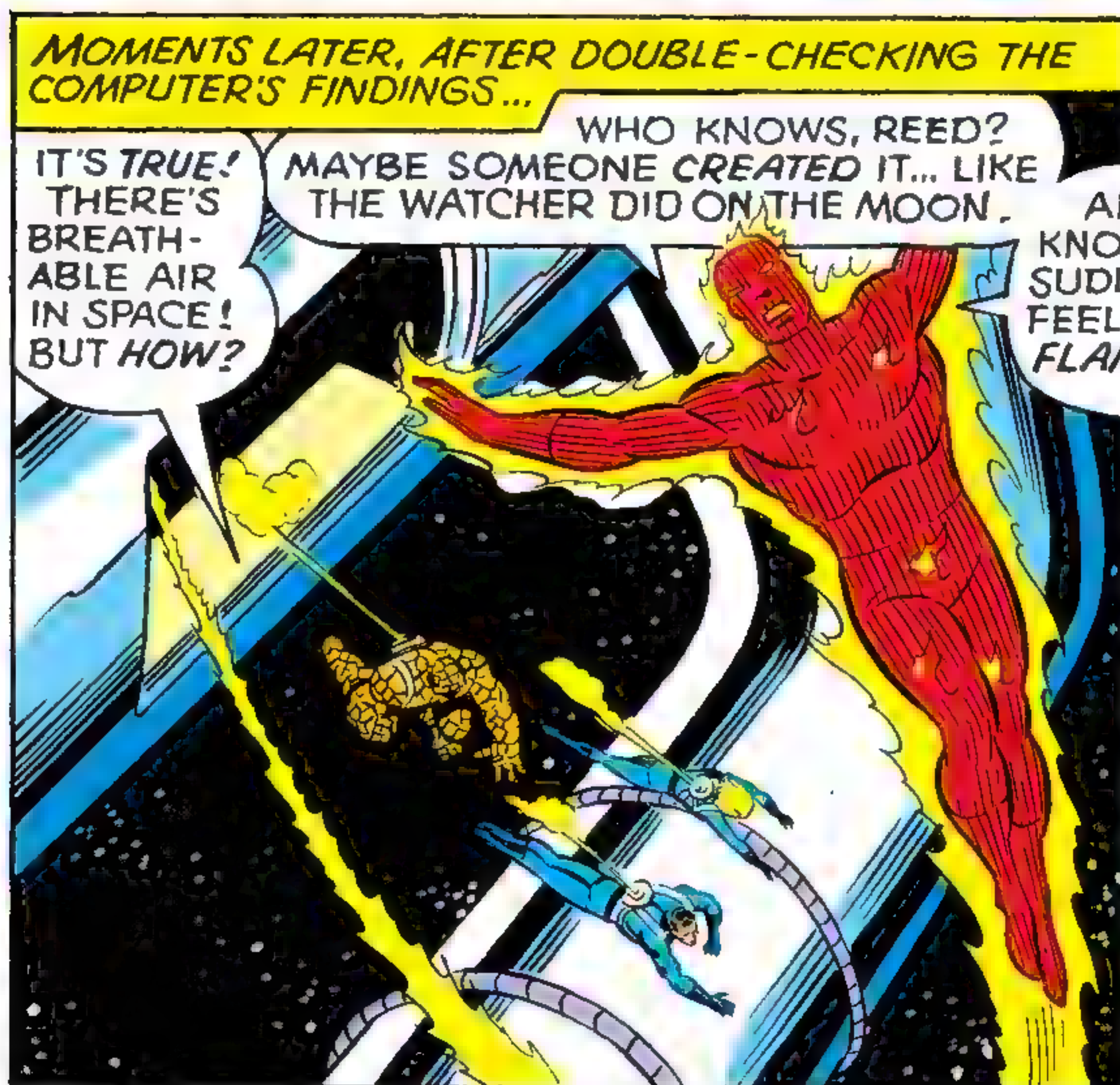
**ATTENTION! SPACE
IN IMMEDIATE
VICINITY CONTAINS
OXYGEN-NITROGEN
BALANCE CAPABLE
OF SUPPORTING
HUMAN LIFE!**



**SENSOR READOUTS ALSO
INDICATE LIFE FORMS!**

ARE YOU
JOKING? THAT'S
FLAGRANTLY
IMPOSSIBLE!

I NEVER JOKE!
I AM NOT
PROGRAMMED
FOR HUMOROUS
REPARTEE!

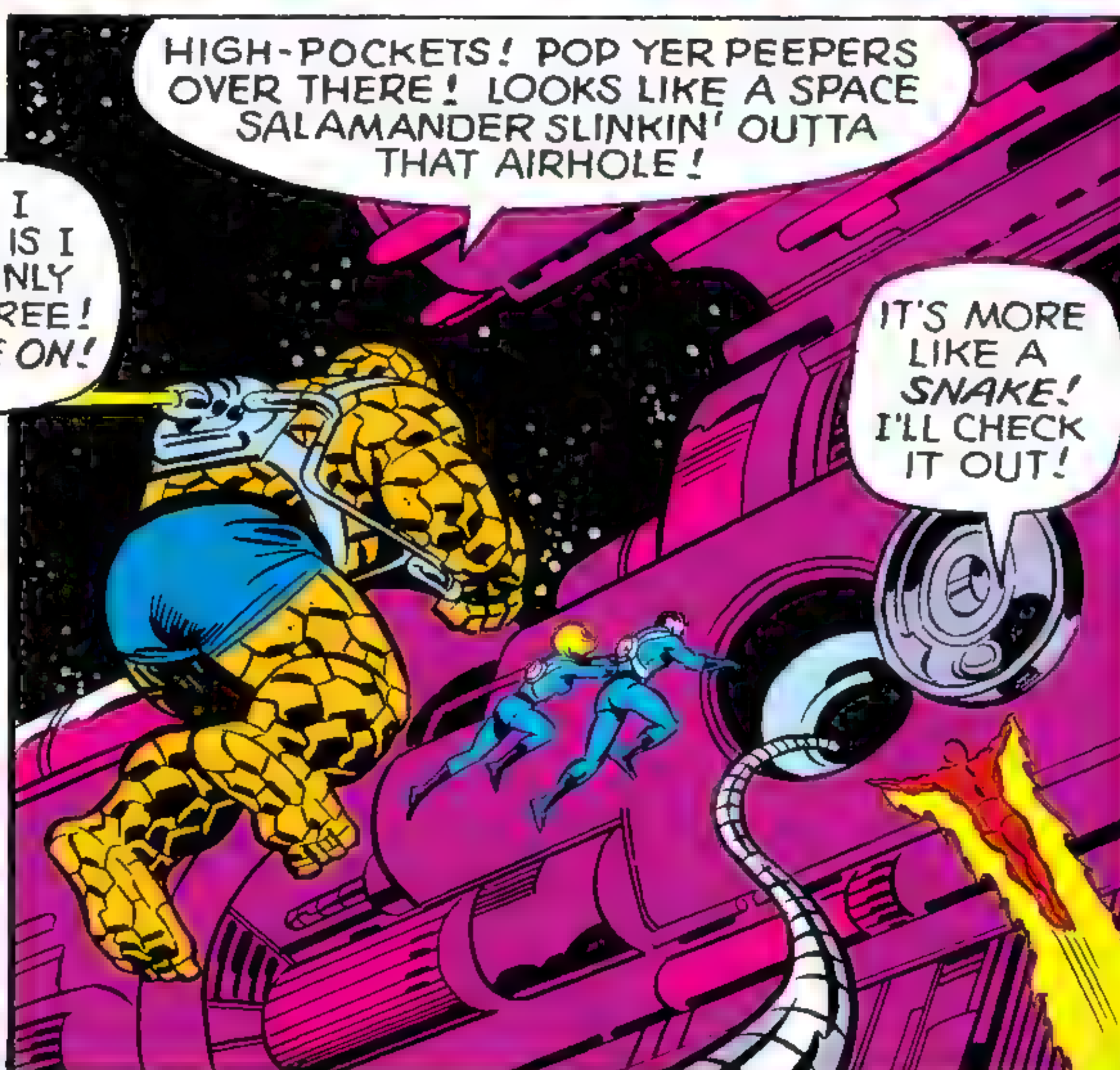


MOMENTS LATER, AFTER DOUBLE-CHECKING THE COMPUTER'S FINDINGS...

**IT'S TRUE!
THERE'S
BREATH-
ABLE AIR
IN SPACE!
BUT HOW?**

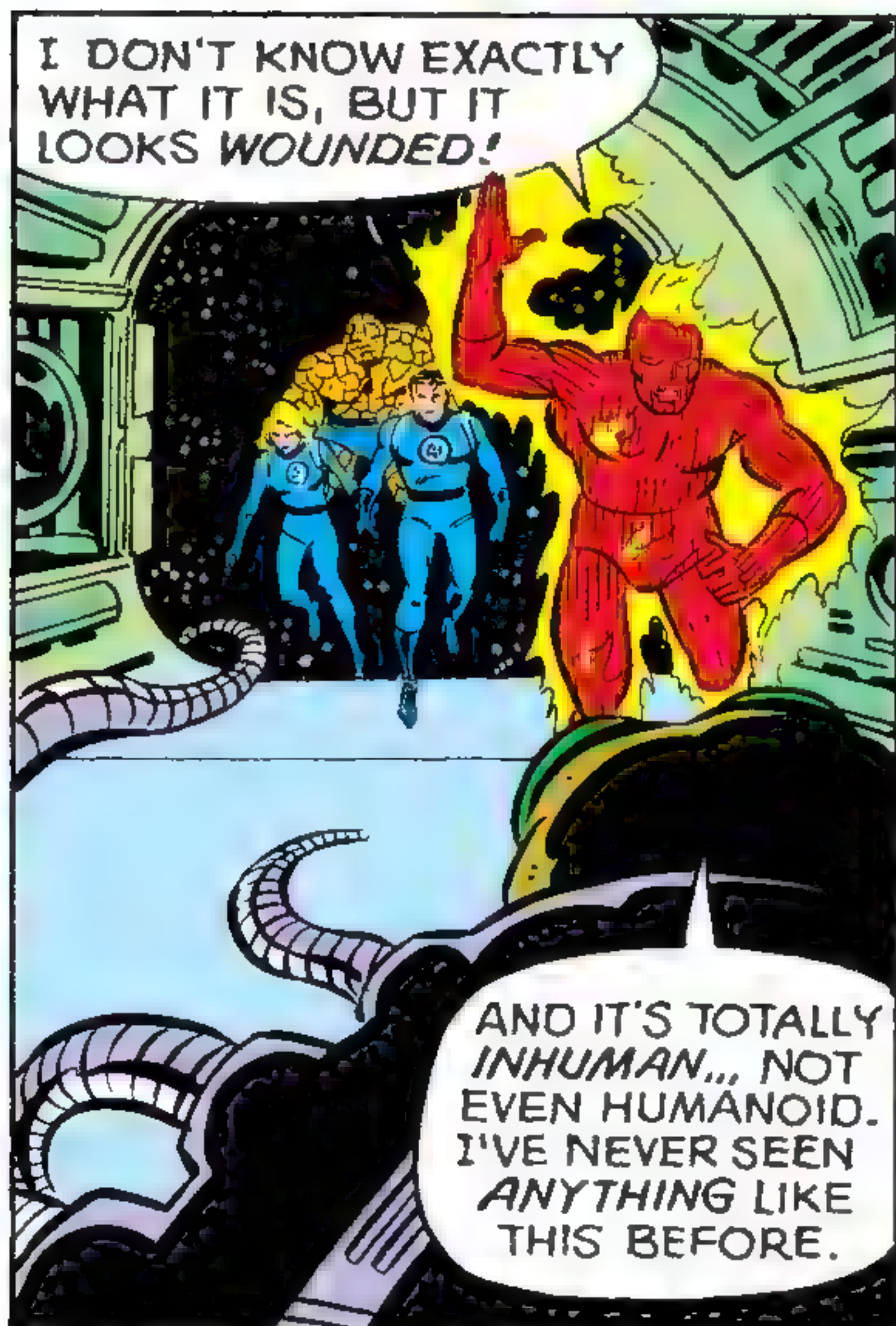
WHO KNOWS, REED?
MAYBE SOMEONE *CREATED* IT... LIKE
THE WATCHER DID ON THE MOON.

ALL I
KNOW IS I
SUDDENLY
FEEL FREE!
FLAME ON!



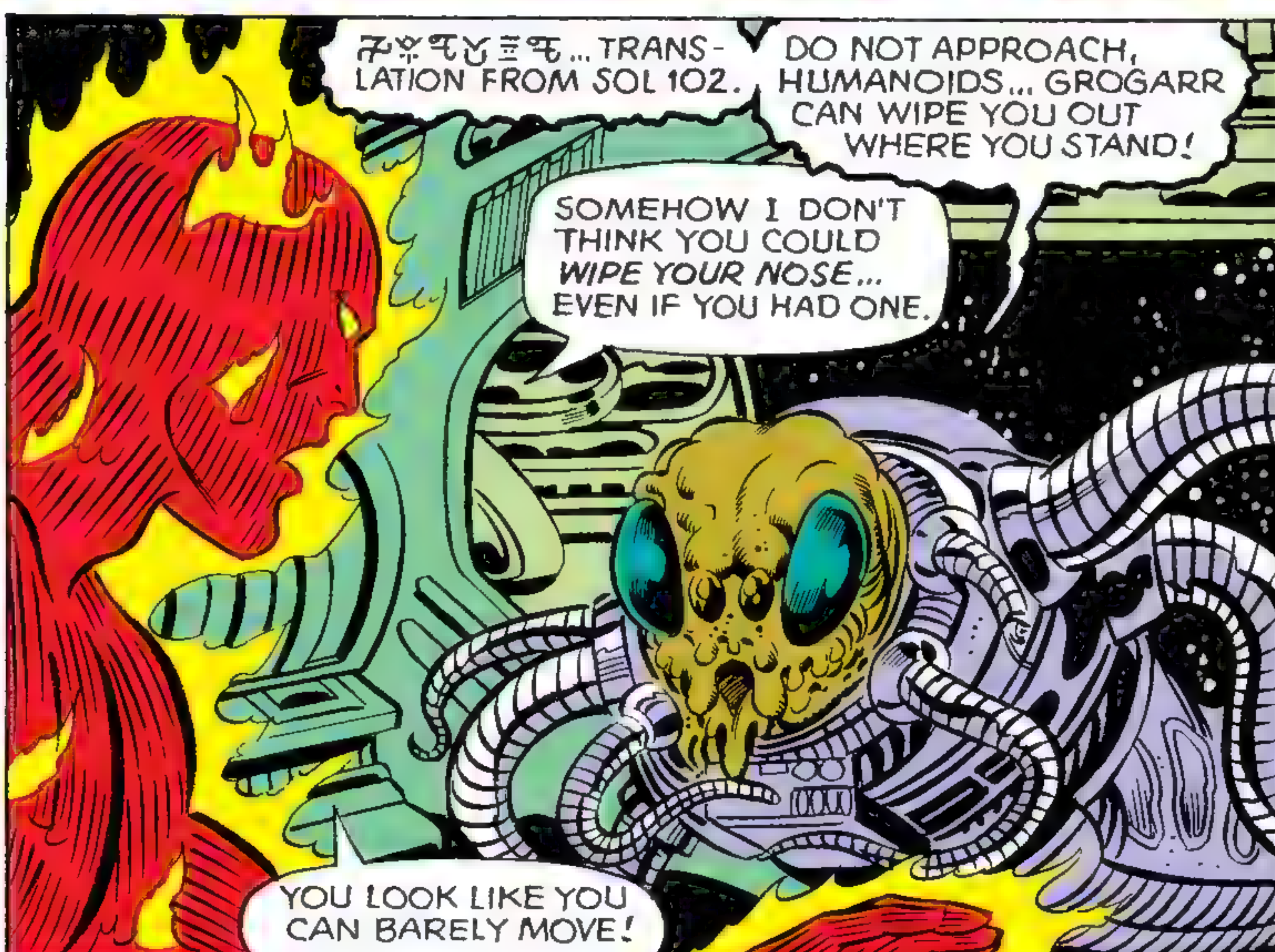
HIGH-POCKETS! POP YER PEEPER
OVER THERE! LOOKS LIKE A SPACE
SALAMANDER SLINKIN' OUTTA
THAT AIRHOLE!

IT'S MORE
LIKE A
SNAKE!
I'LL CHECK
IT OUT!



I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY
WHAT IT IS, BUT IT
LOOKS *WOUNDED*!

AND IT'S TOTALLY
INHUMAN... NOT
EVEN HUMANOID.
I'VE NEVER SEEN
ANYTHING LIKE
THIS BEFORE.

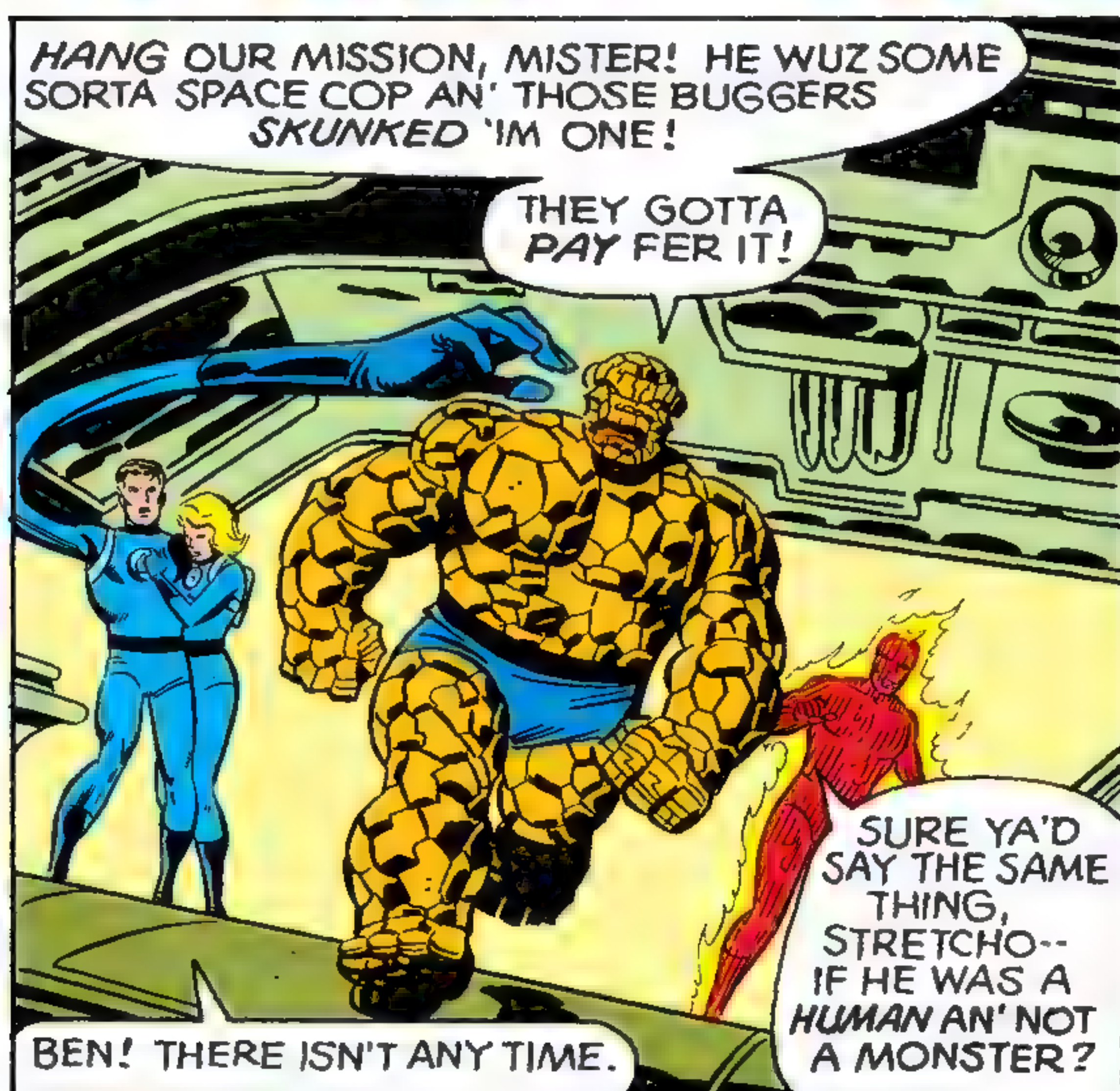
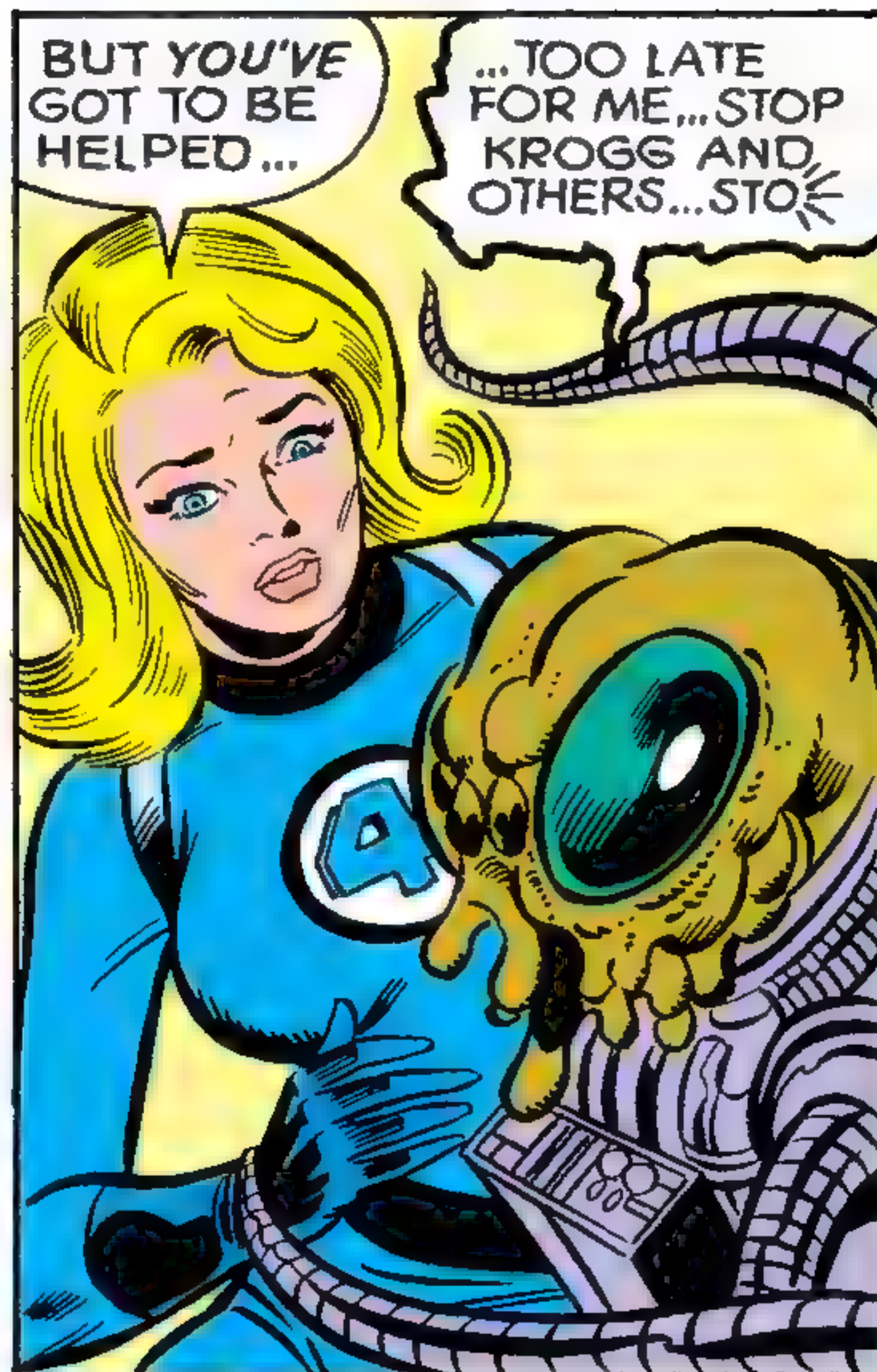
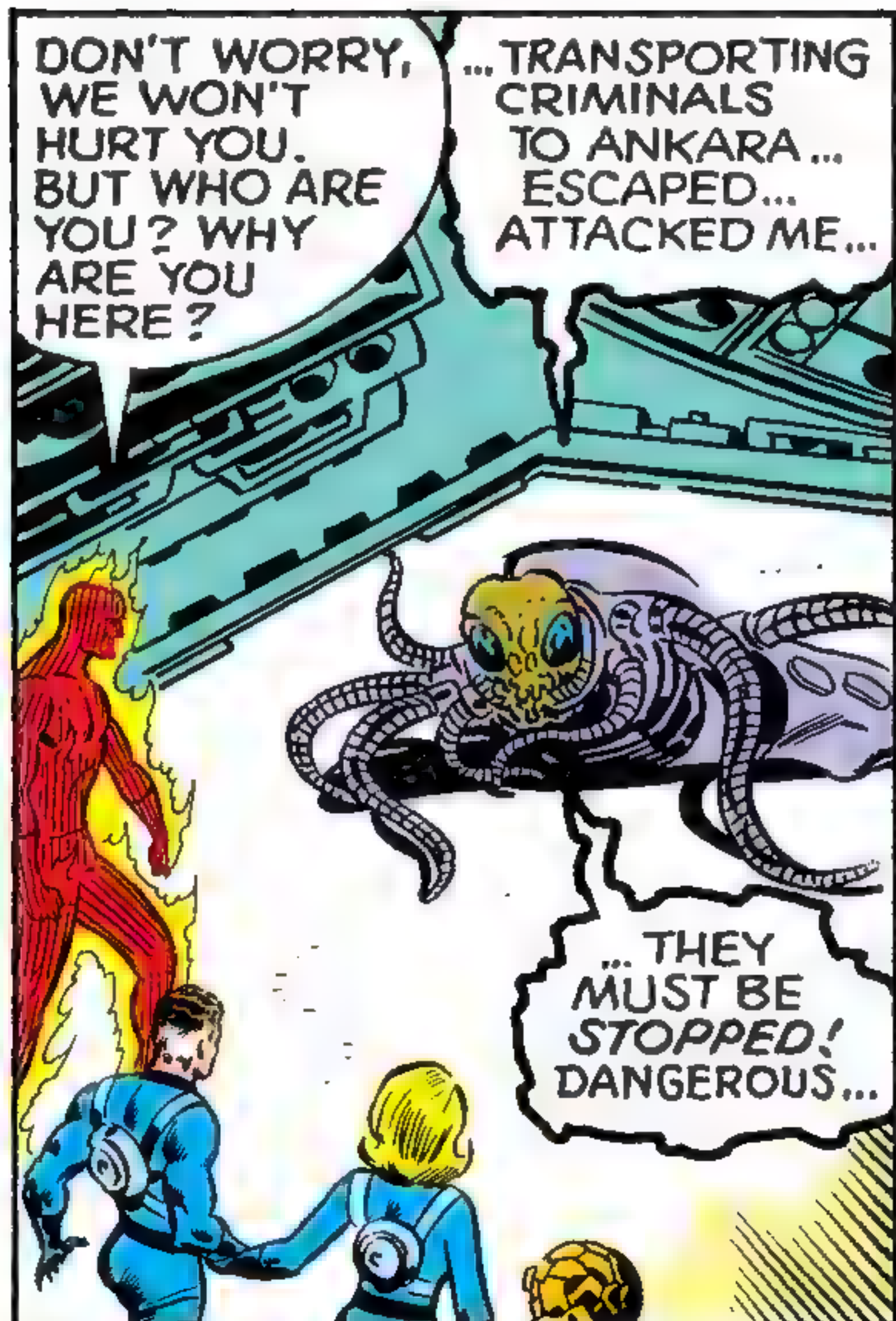


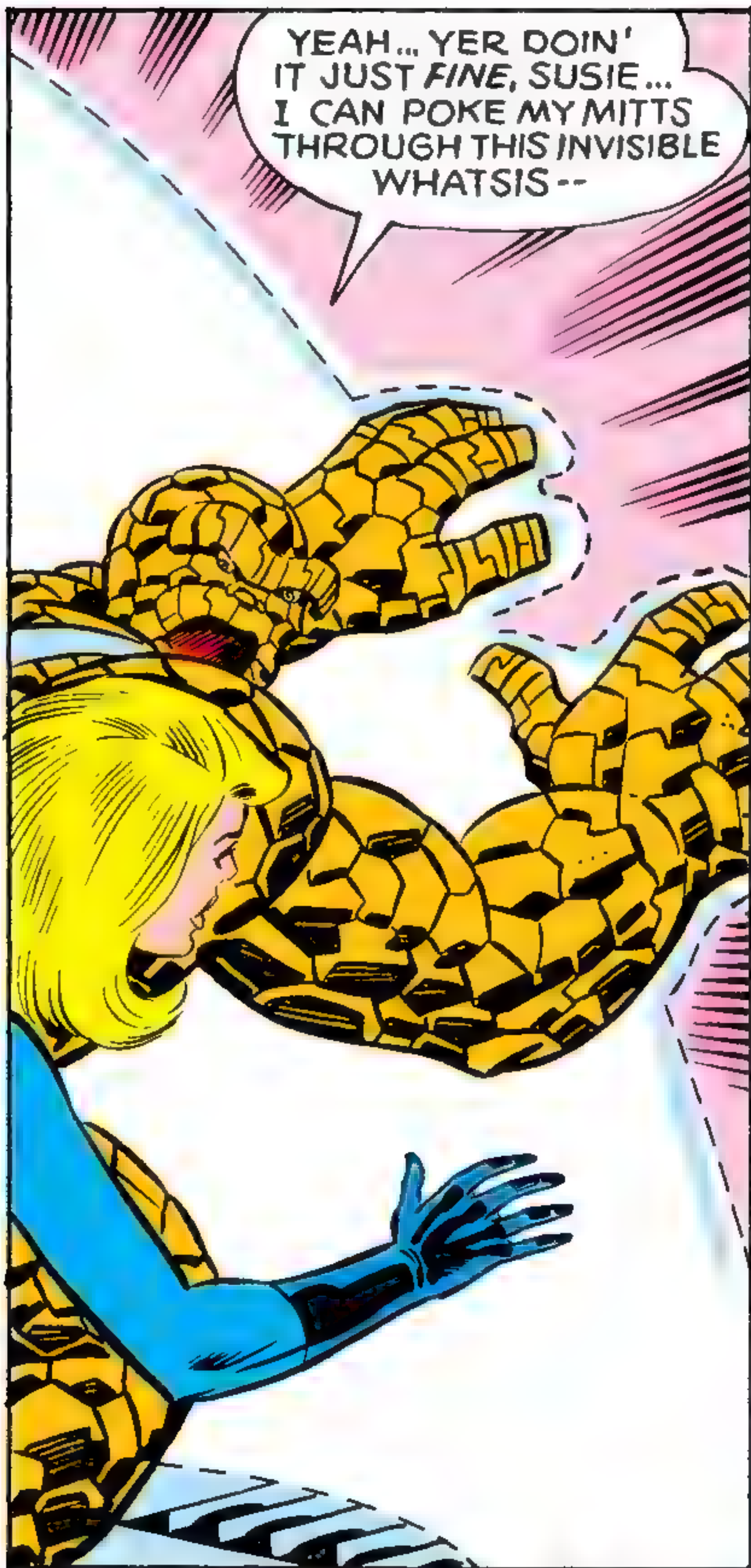
795633 TRANS-
LATION FROM SOL 102

DO NOT APPROACH,
HUMANOID... GROGARR
CAN WIPE YOU OUT
WHERE YOU STAND!

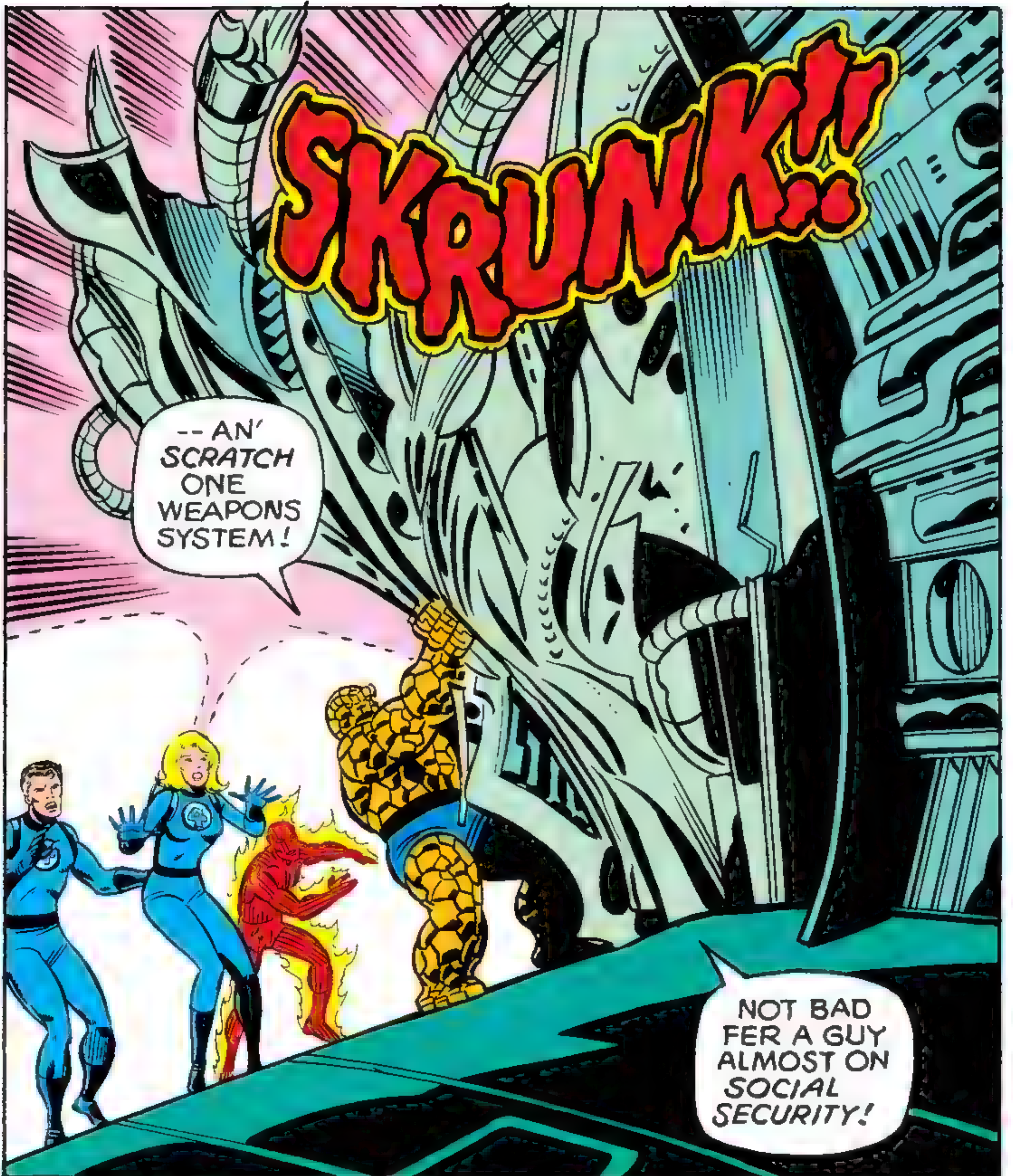
SOMEHOW I DON'T
THINK YOU COULD
WIPE YOUR NOSE...
EVEN IF YOU HAD ONE.

YOU LOOK LIKE YOU
CAN BARELY MOVE!





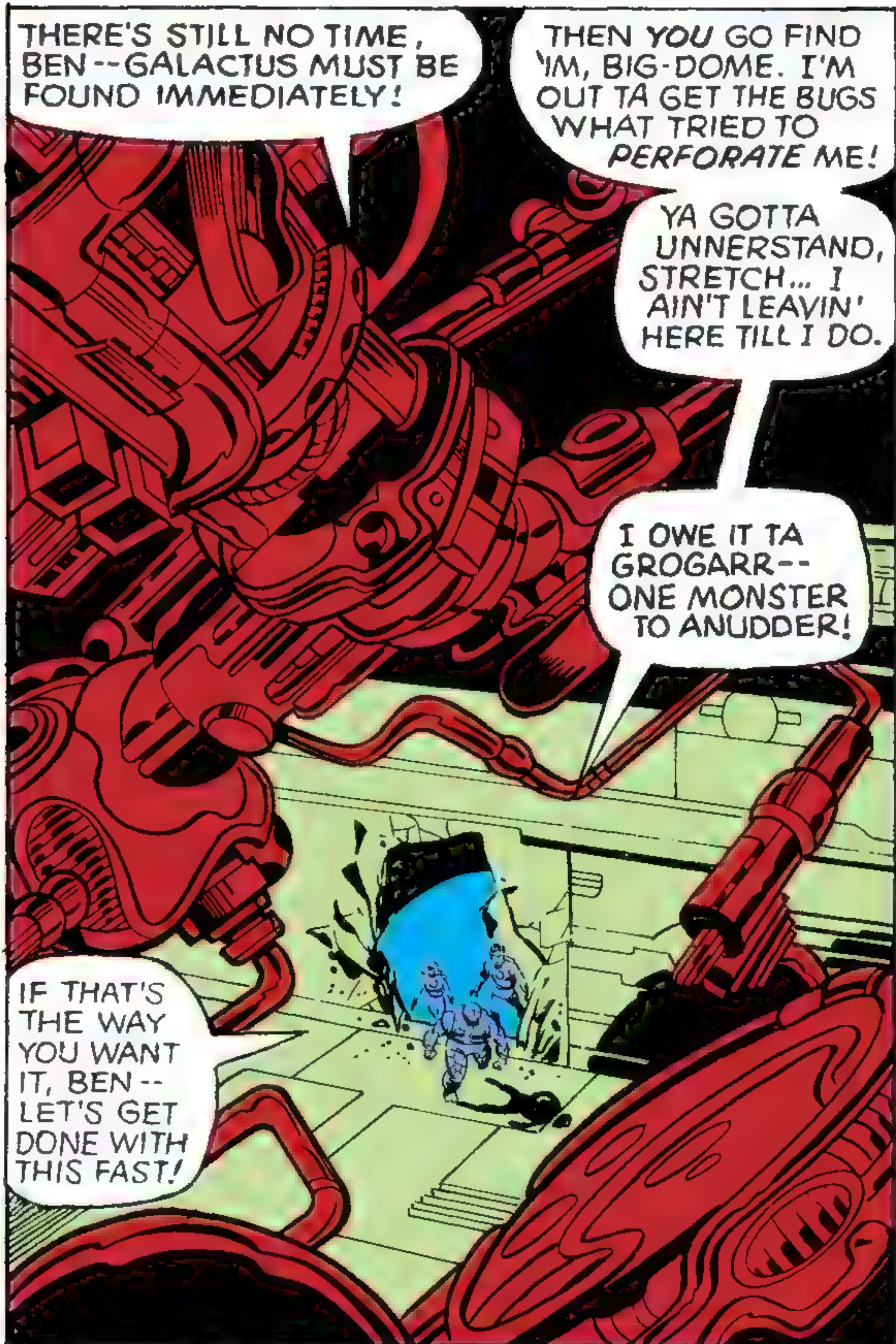
YEAH... YER DOIN' IT JUST FINE, SUSIE... I CAN POKE MY MITTS THROUGH THIS INVISIBLE WHATSIS --



SKRUNK!!

-- AN' SCRATCH ONE WEAPONS SYSTEM!

NOT BAD FER A GUY ALMOST ON SOCIAL SECURITY!



THERE'S STILL NO TIME, BEN -- GALACTUS MUST BE FOUND IMMEDIATELY!

THEN YOU GO FIND 'IM, BIG-DOME. I'M OUT TA GET THE BUGS WHAT TRIED TO PERFORATE ME!

YA GOTTA UNNERSTAND, STRETCH... I AIN'T LEAVIN' HERE TILL I DO.

I OWE IT TA GROGARR-- ONE MONSTER TO ANUDDER!

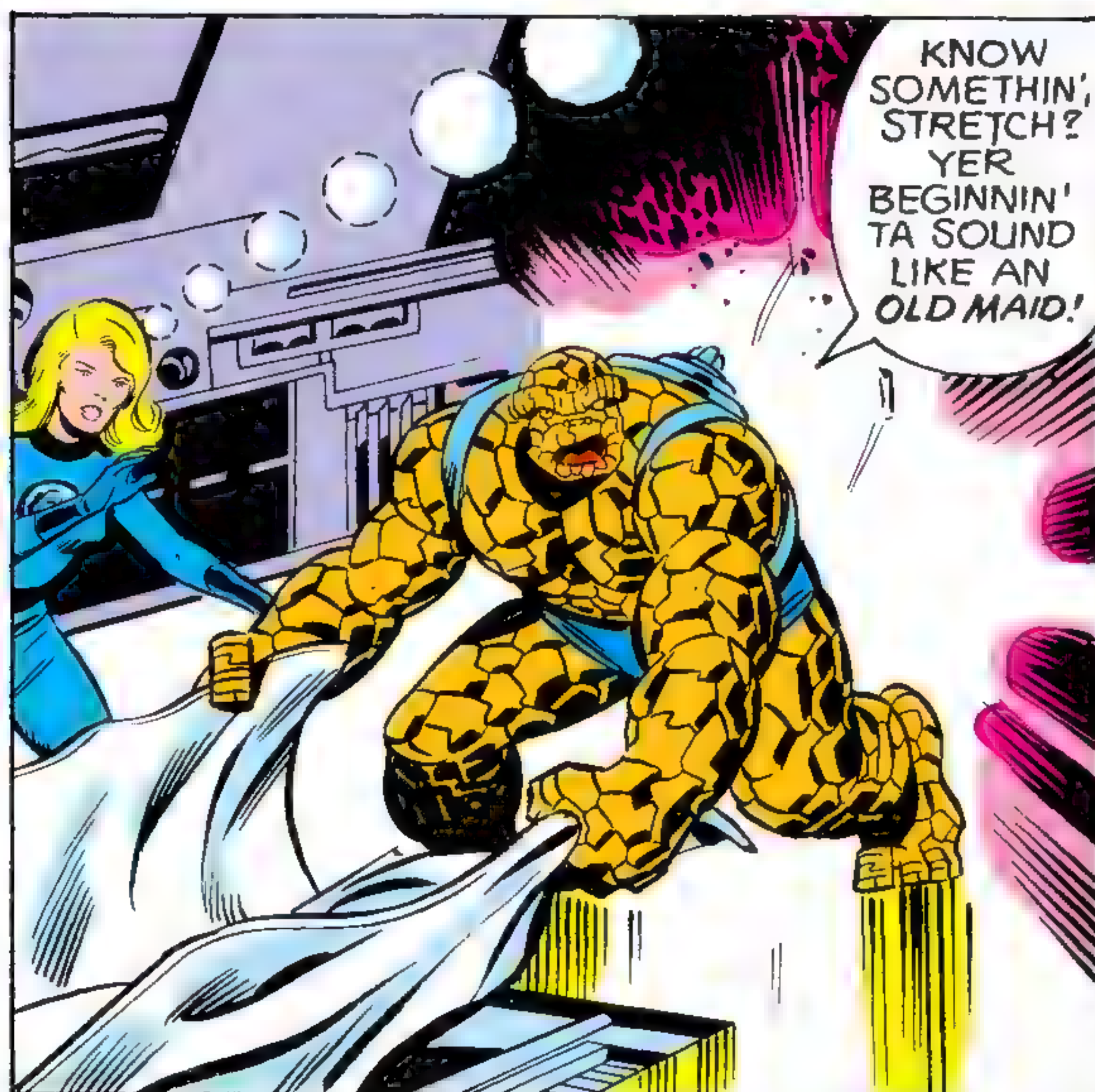
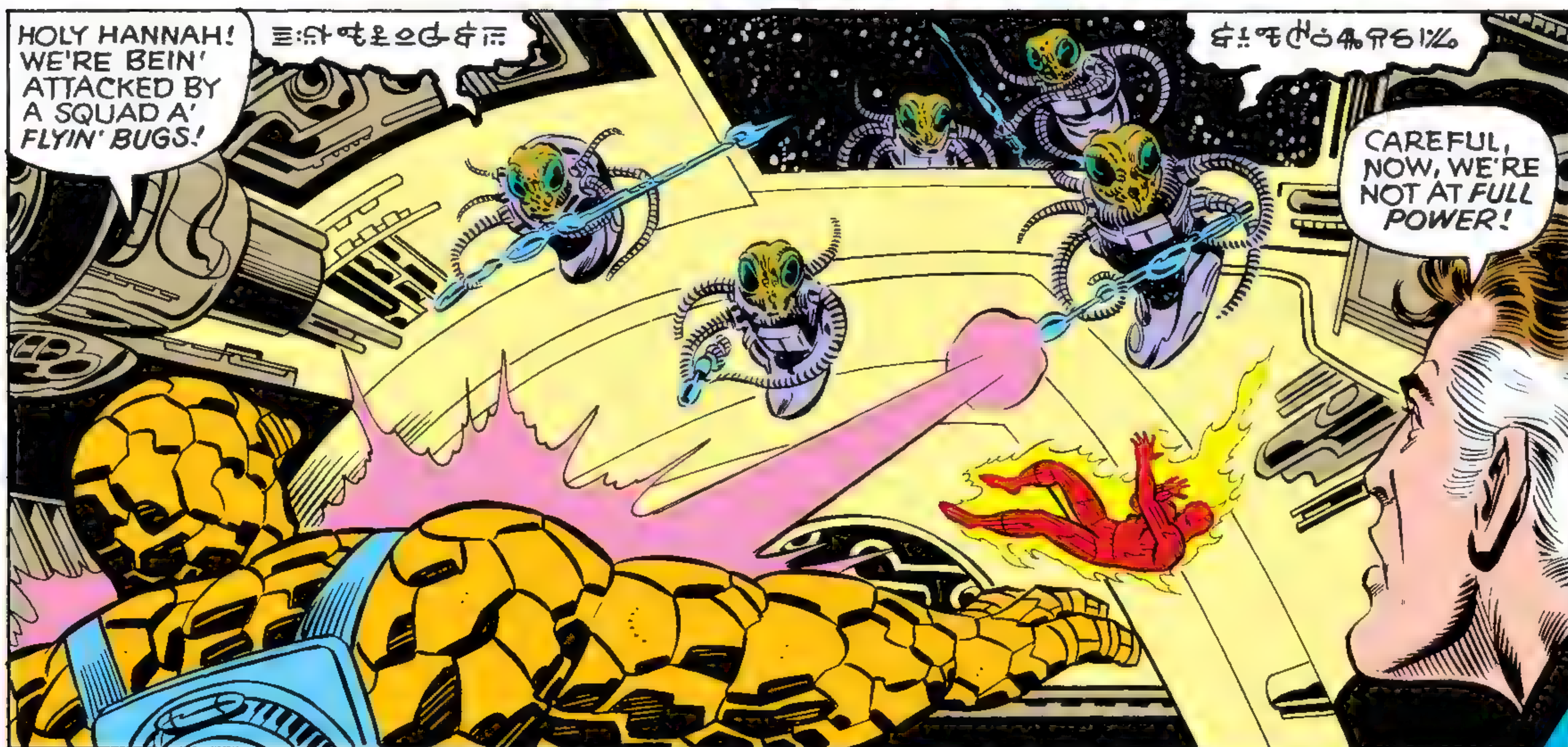
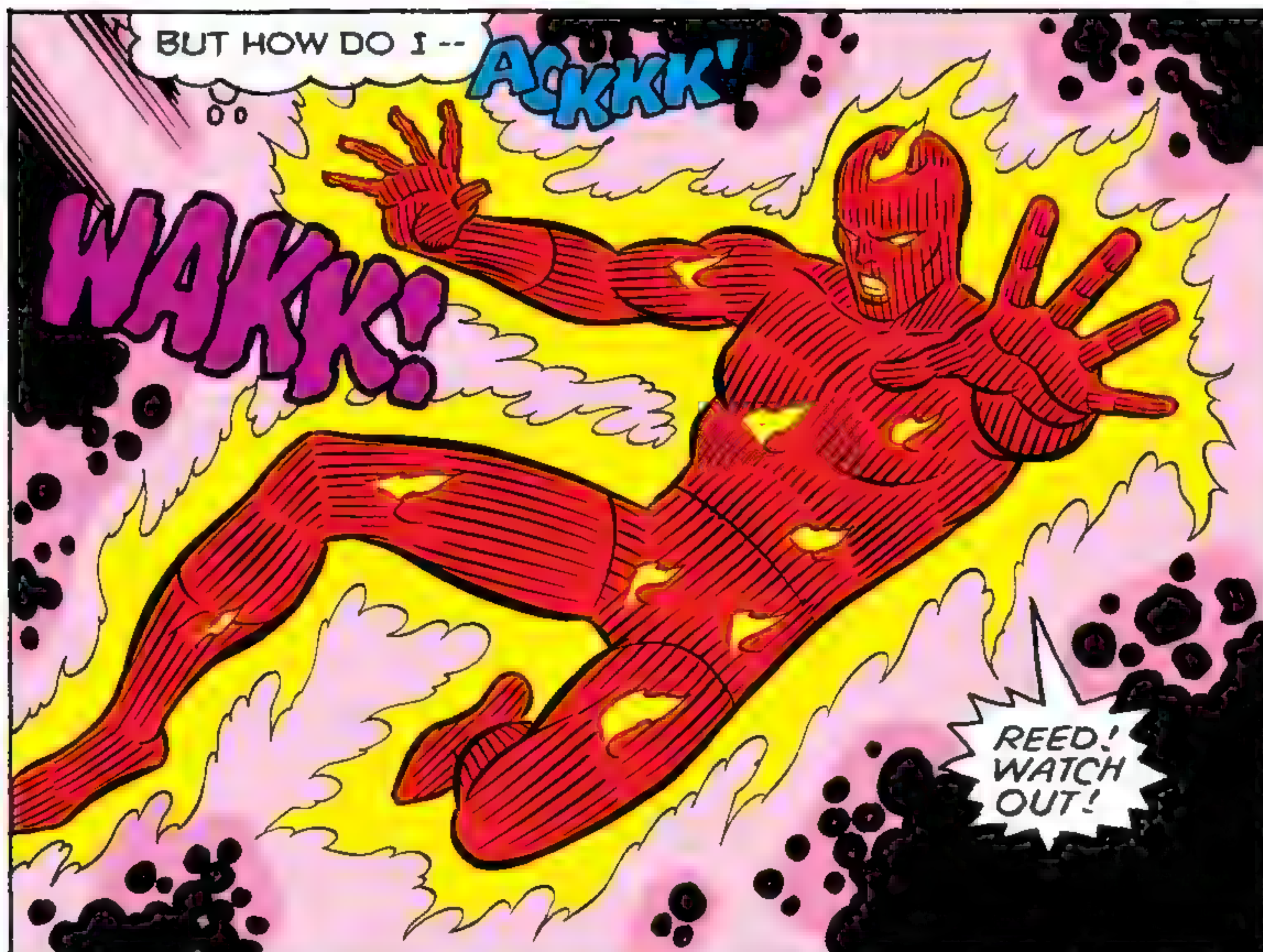
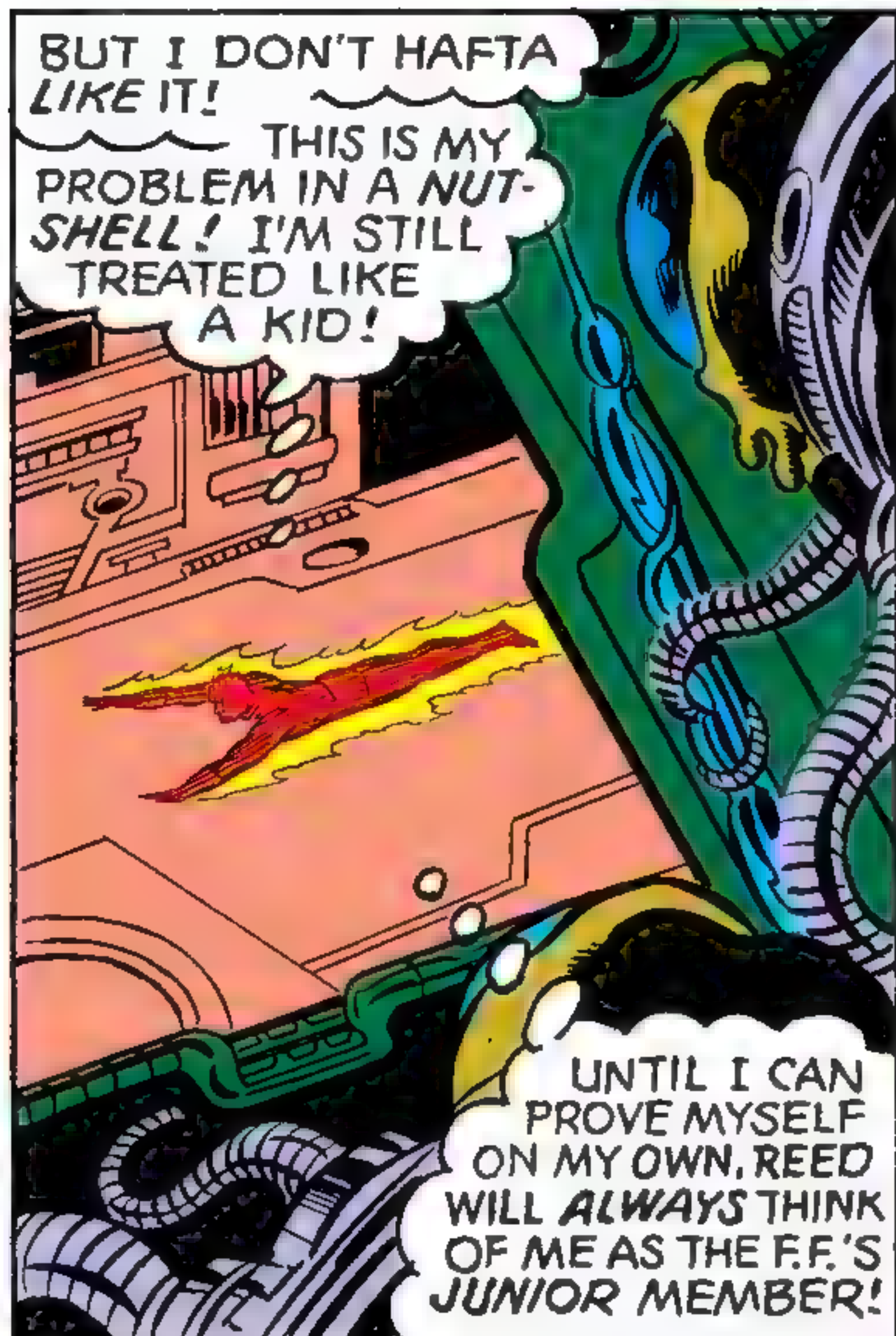
IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT, BEN -- LET'S GET DONE WITH THIS FAST!

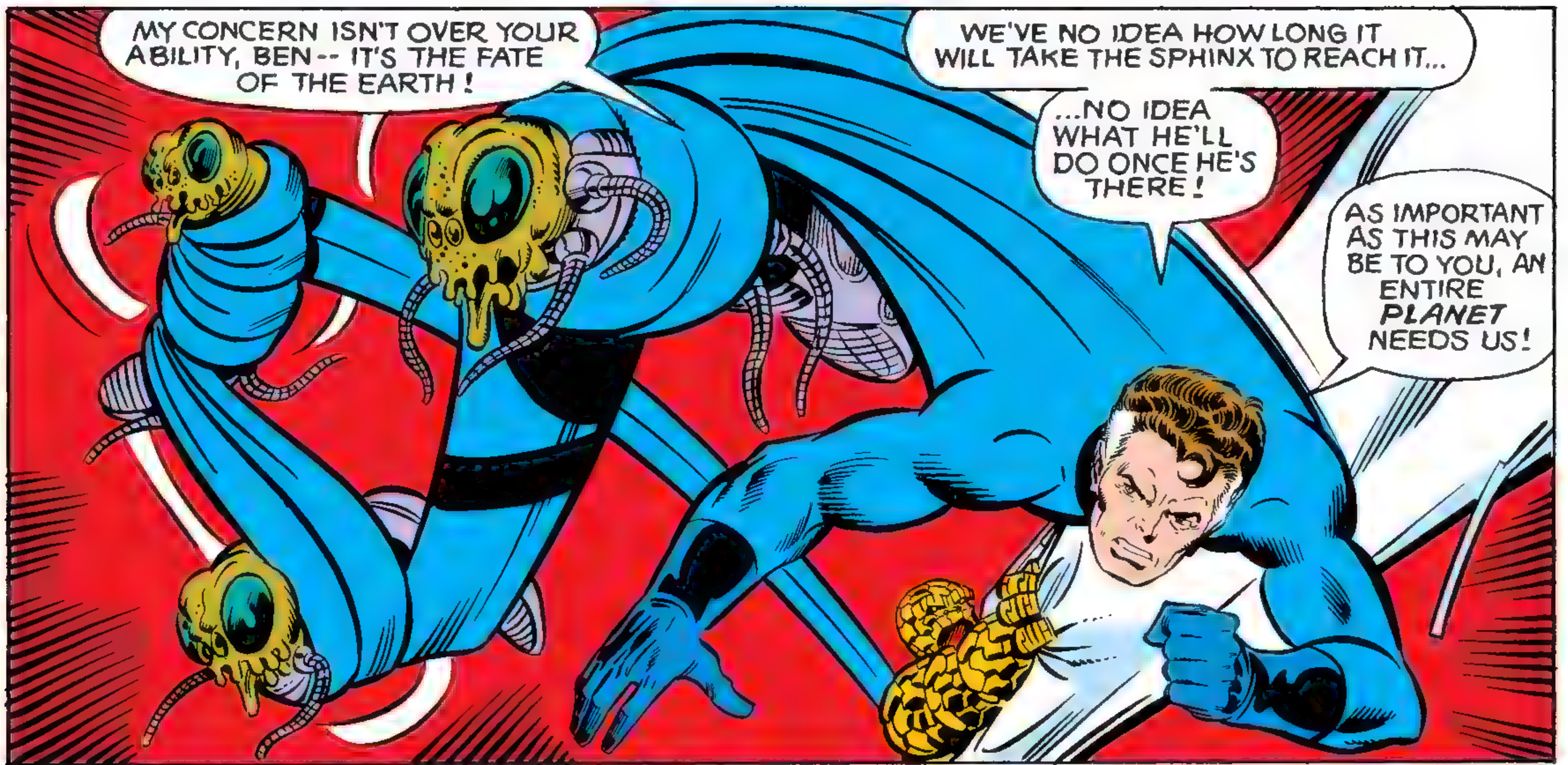


JOHNNY-- YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHOSE POWERS ARE TOTALLY INTACT-- SCOUT AHEAD QUICKLY AND GET BACK HERE FAST AS YOU CAN.

SURE, LEADERMAN-- I GOT IT!

AND DON'T TRY TO BE A HERO ALL ON YOUR OWN. GOT THAT, SON?





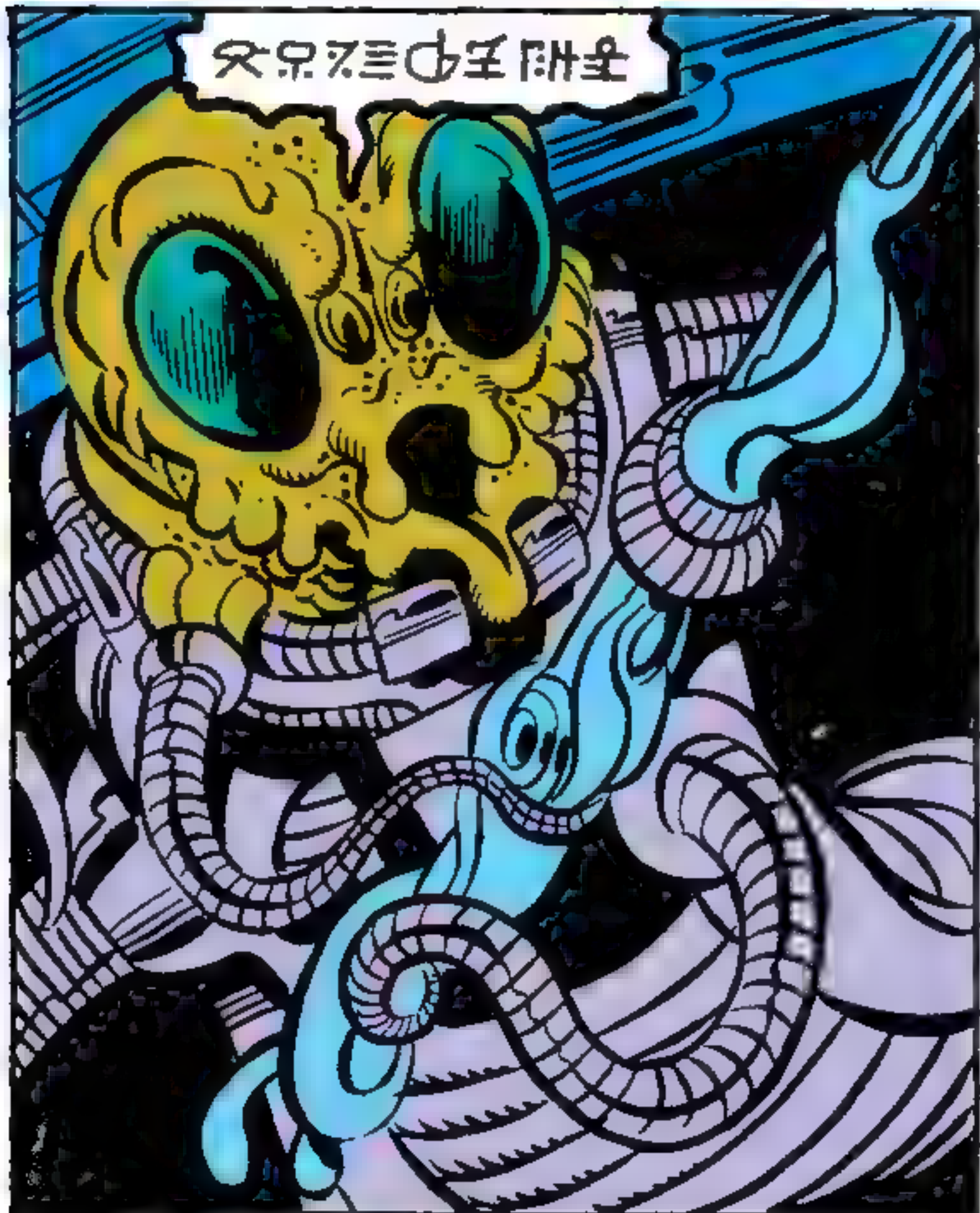
MY CONCERN ISN'T OVER YOUR ABILITY, BEN-- IT'S THE FATE OF THE EARTH!

WE'VE NO IDEA HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE THE SPHINX TO REACH IT...

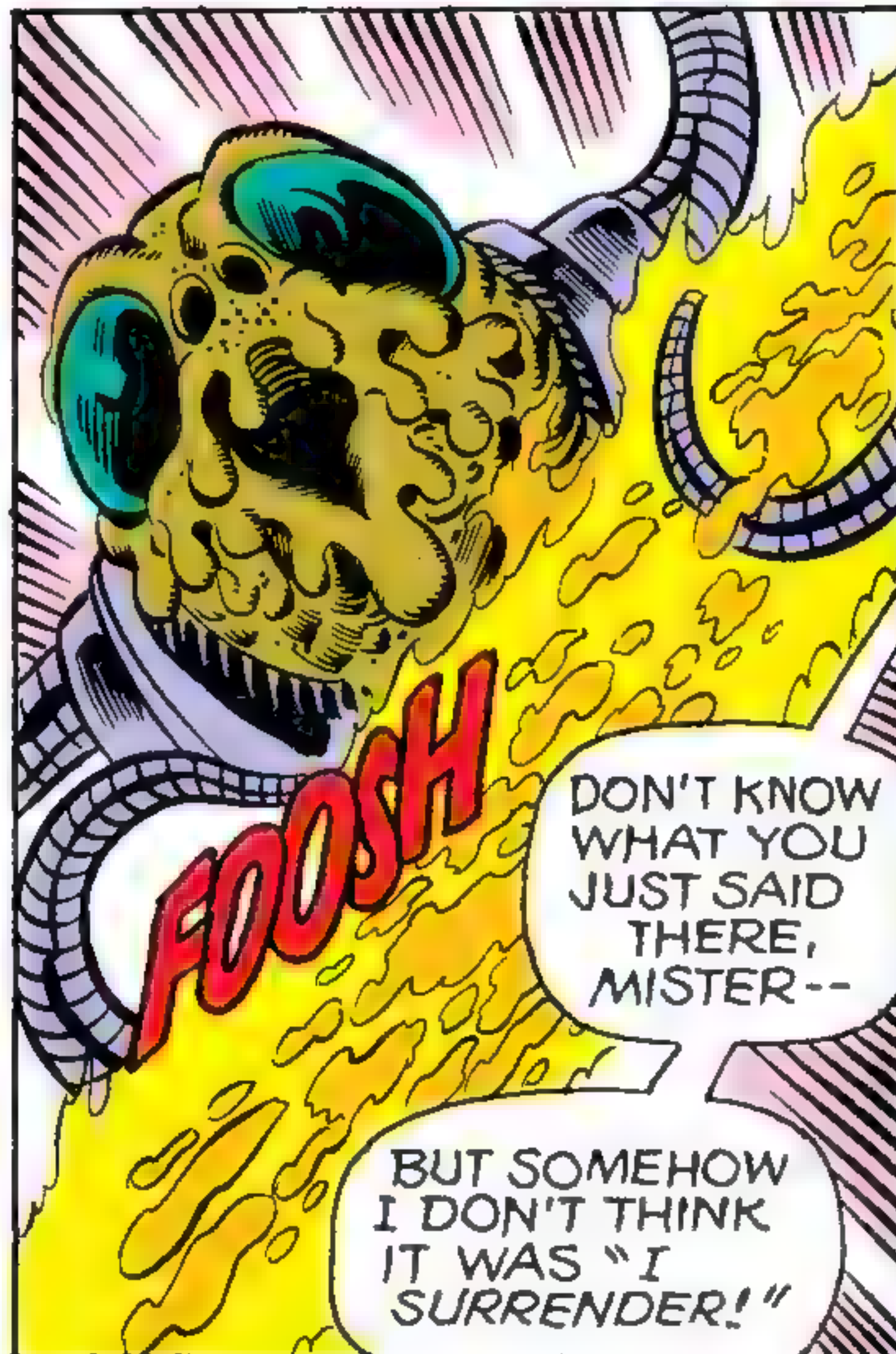
...NO IDEA WHAT HE'LL DO ONCE HE'S THERE!

AS IMPORTANT AS THIS MAY BE TO YOU, AN ENTIRE PLANET NEEDS US!

BUT, AS A WEAK AND PAINED REED RICHARDS WENDS HIS WAY AROUND THE ATTACKING ALIEN FORCE...



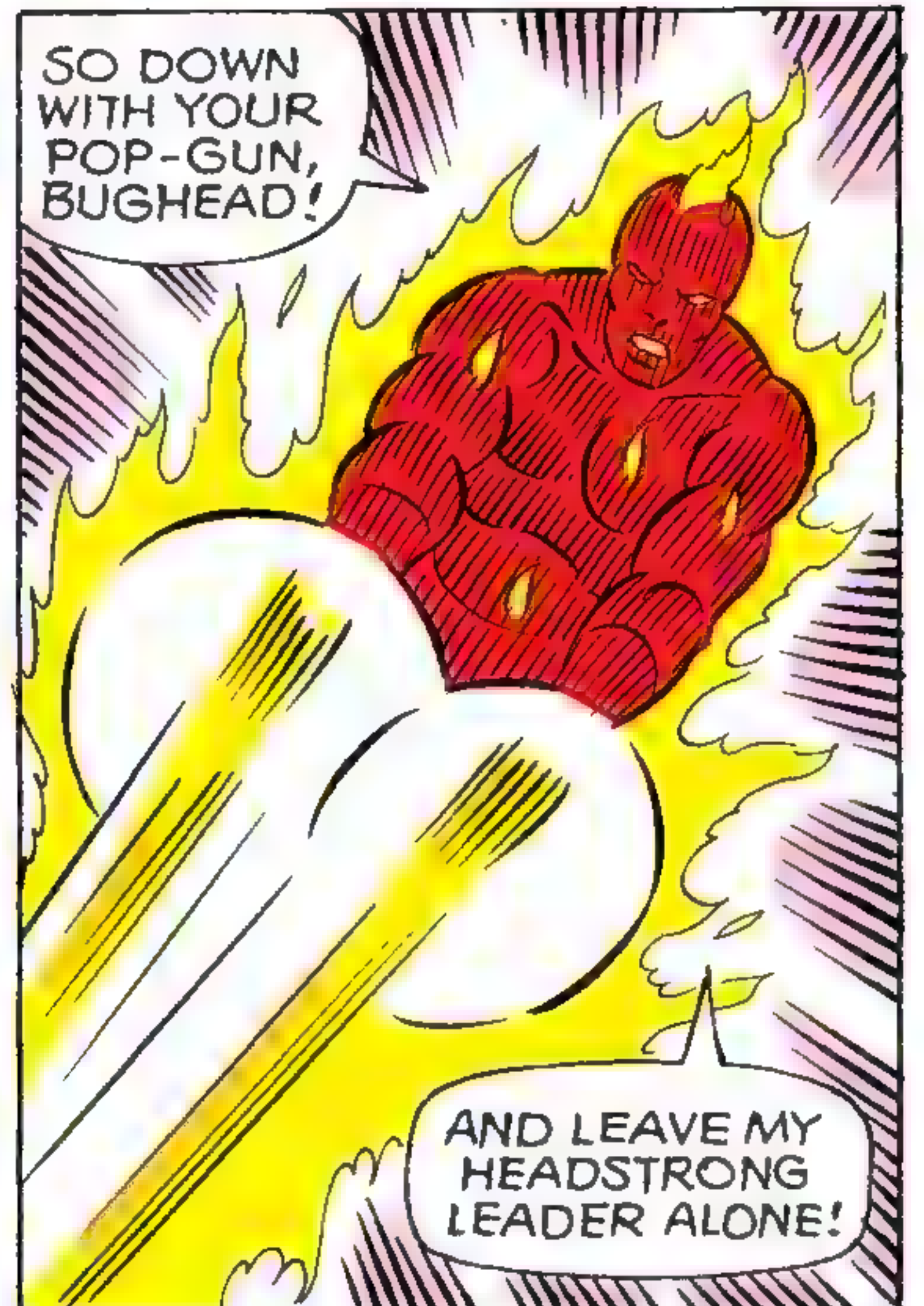
天京三也五附全



FOOSH

DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU JUST SAID THERE, MISTER--

BUT SOMEHOW I DON'T THINK IT WAS "I SURRENDER!"



SO DOWN WITH YOUR POP-GUN, BUGHEAD!

AND LEAVE MY HEADSTRONG LEADER ALONE!



IT'S OF NO USE, REED! THEY'RE BREAKING THRU MY SHIELDS!

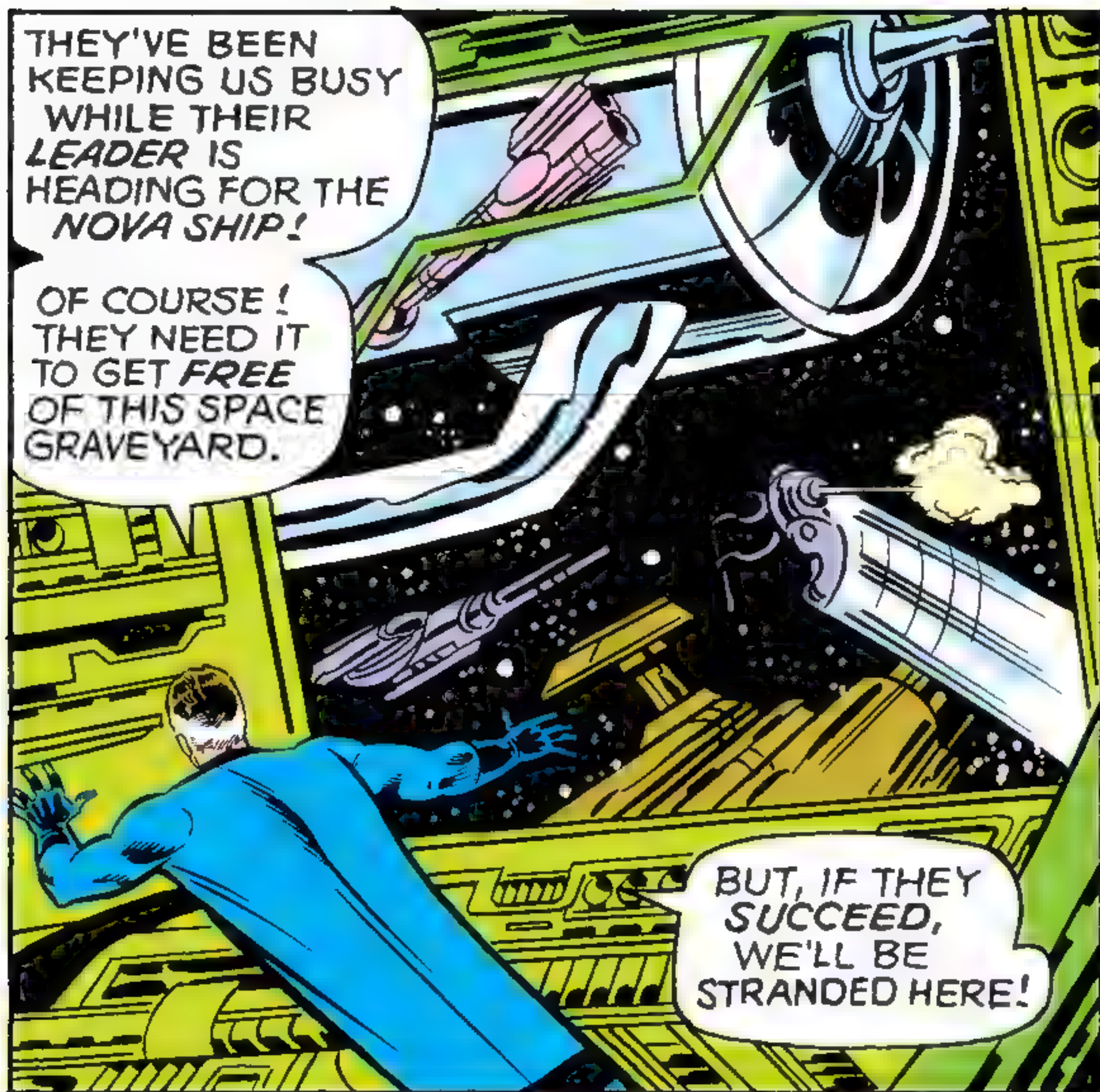
NOTHING SEEMS TO BE ABLE TO STOP THEM!



I KNOW THAT, SUE-- EVEN JOHNNY'S FLAME-BURSTS DON'T SLOW THEM DOWN-- WAIT!

NO! I'VE BEEN AN UTTER FOOL!

THEY'VE BEEN SLOWING US DOWN! LOOK AT THE VIEW SCREEN!



THEY'VE BEEN KEEPING US BUSY WHILE THEIR LEADER IS HEADING FOR THE NOVA SHIP!

OF COURSE! THEY NEED IT TO GET FREE OF THIS SPACE GRAVEYARD.

BUT, IF THEY SUCCEED, WE'LL BE STRANDED HERE!



AN' WE STILL GOTTA STOP THEM FLYIN' BOZOS!

BEN! OUR ONLY CHANCE! MANEUVER 108!

Hunh? WHAT IN SAM HILL ARE YA YAKKIN' ABOUT?

THE HUMAN CAGE! DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

OH YEAH-THAT! WHY DIDN'T YA JUST SAY SO?

MANEUVER 108!?! SHEESH!

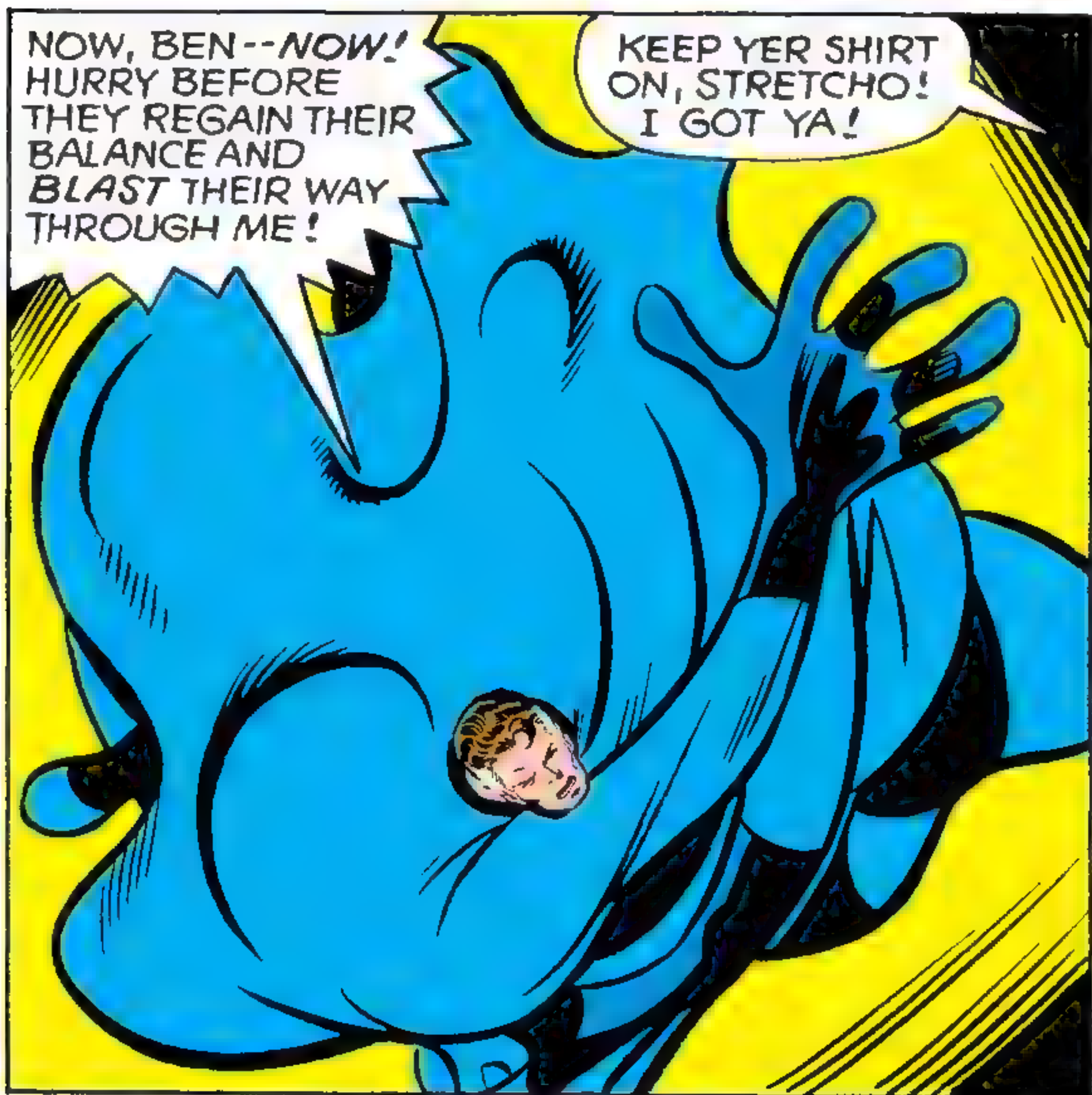


SUDDENLY, MR. FANTASTIC'S STRETCHABLE BODY SPREADS WIDE AND THIN--

~*~*~*~

~*~*~*~

--AND, WITH PRACTICED EASE, HE BLANKETS THE ASTONISHED ALIENS WITHIN HIS PLIABLE FORM!



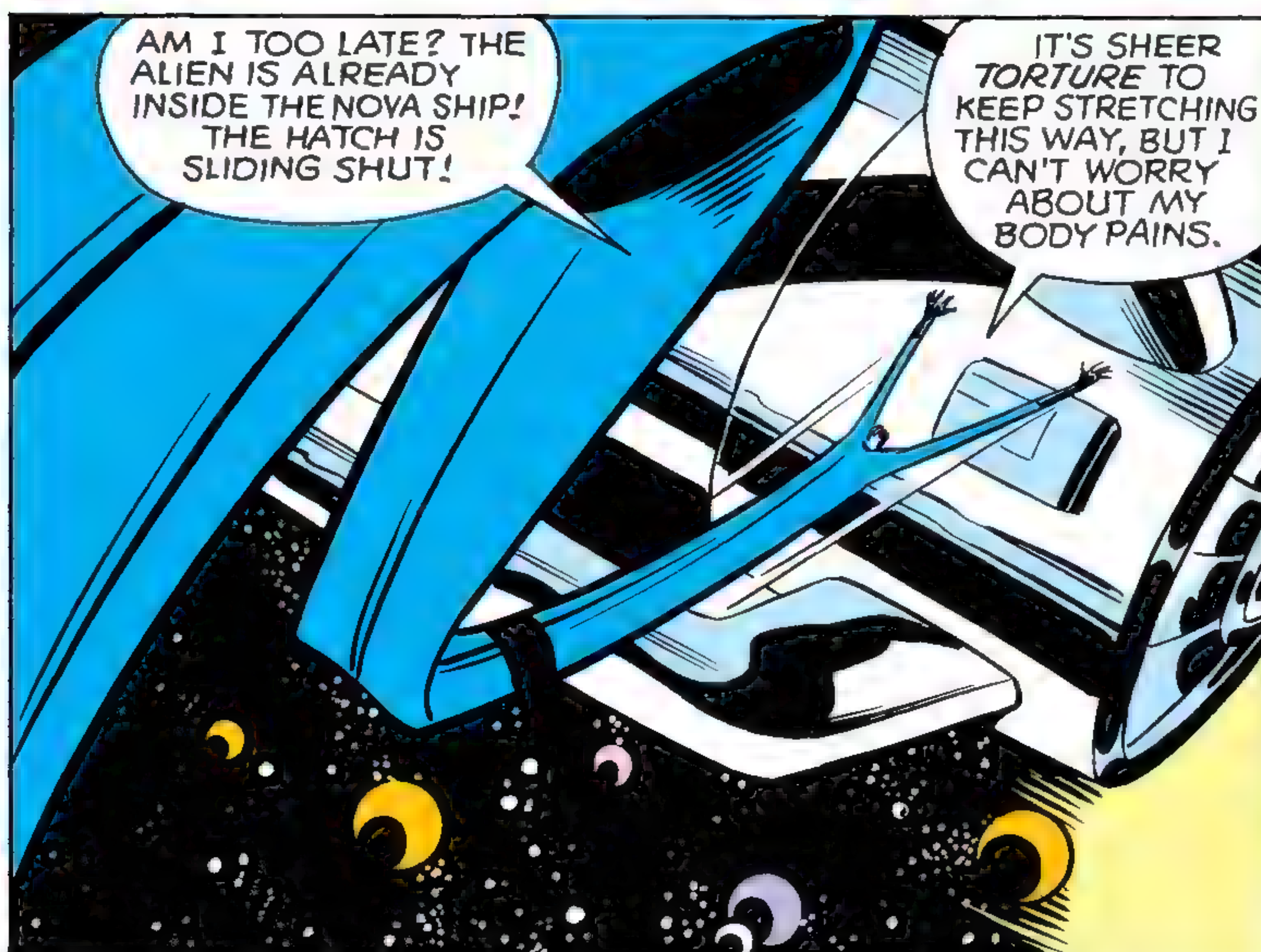
NOW, BEN--NOW! HURRY BEFORE THEY REGAIN THEIR BALANCE AND BLAST THEIR WAY THROUGH ME!

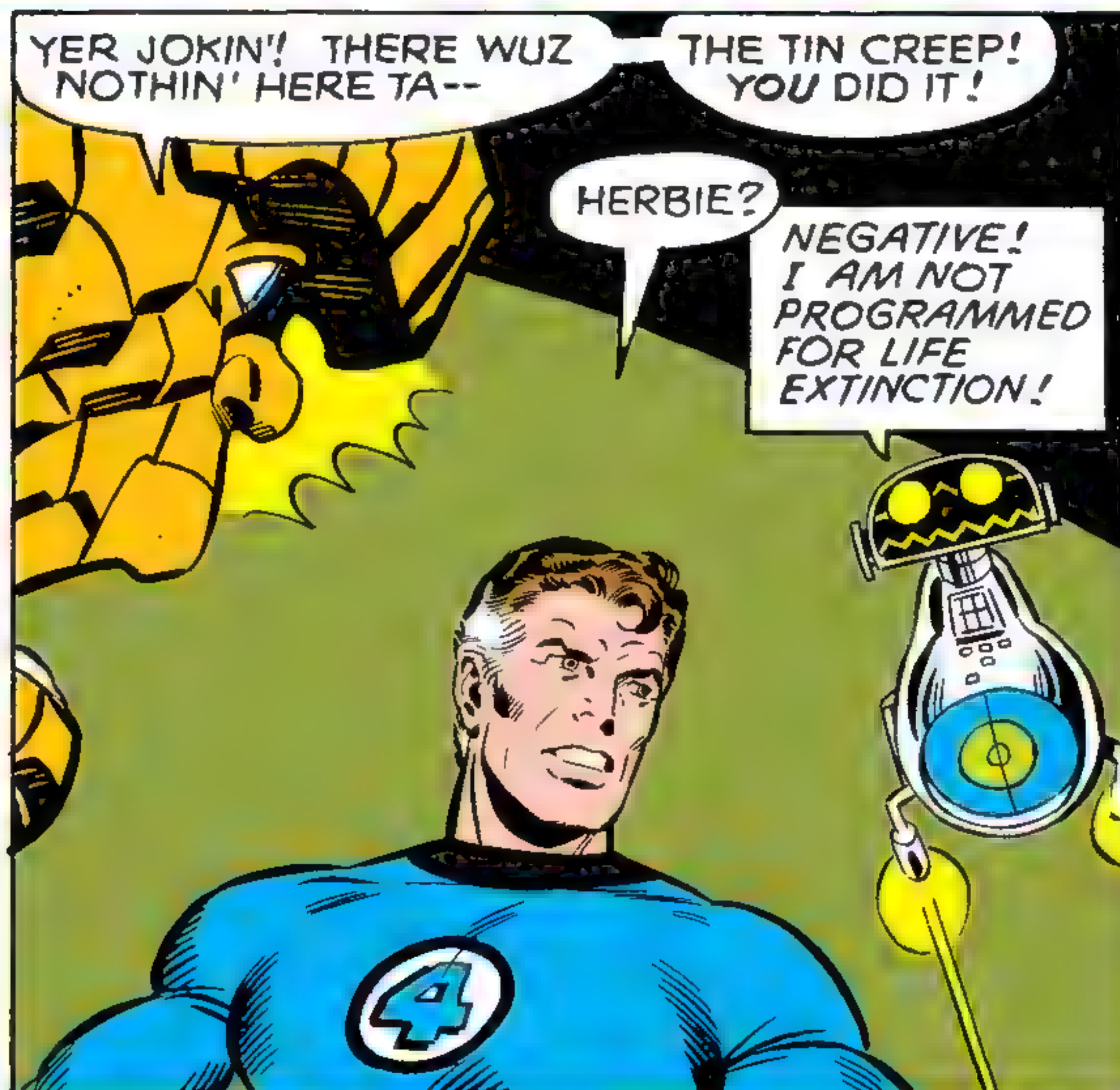
KEEP YER SHIRT ON, STRETCHO! I GOT YA!



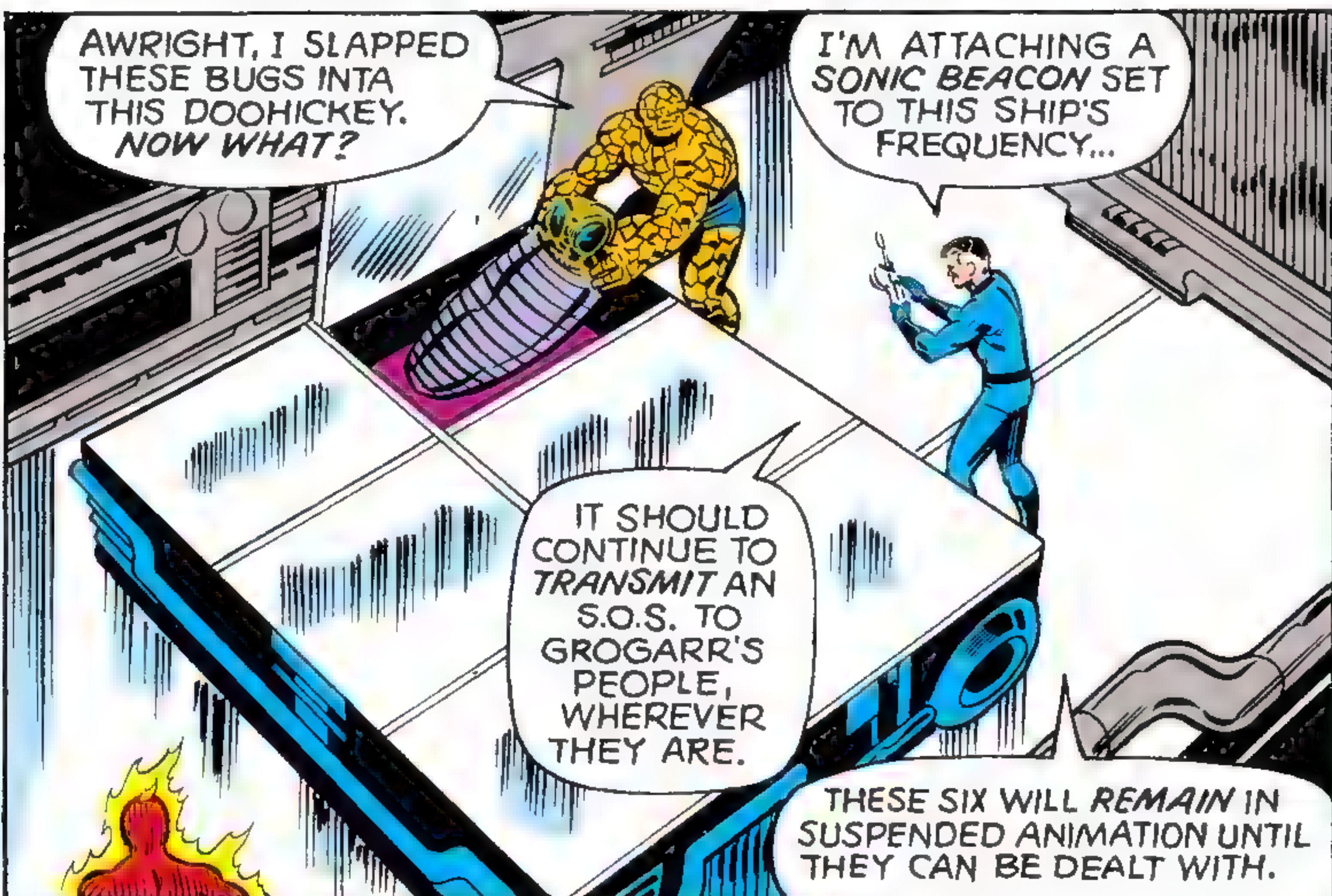
YA SURE YER READY TA TAKE THIS WALLOPIN'?

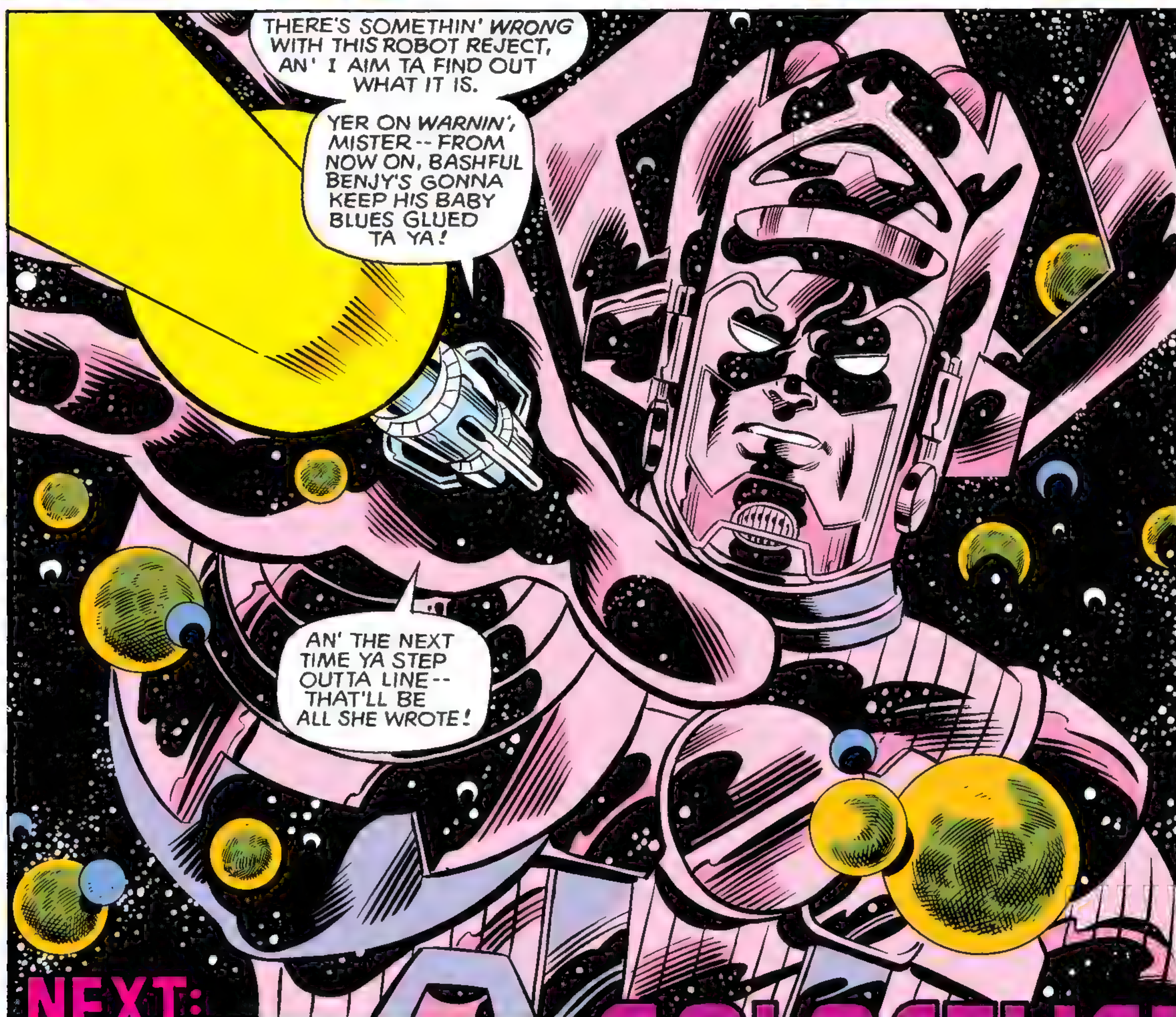
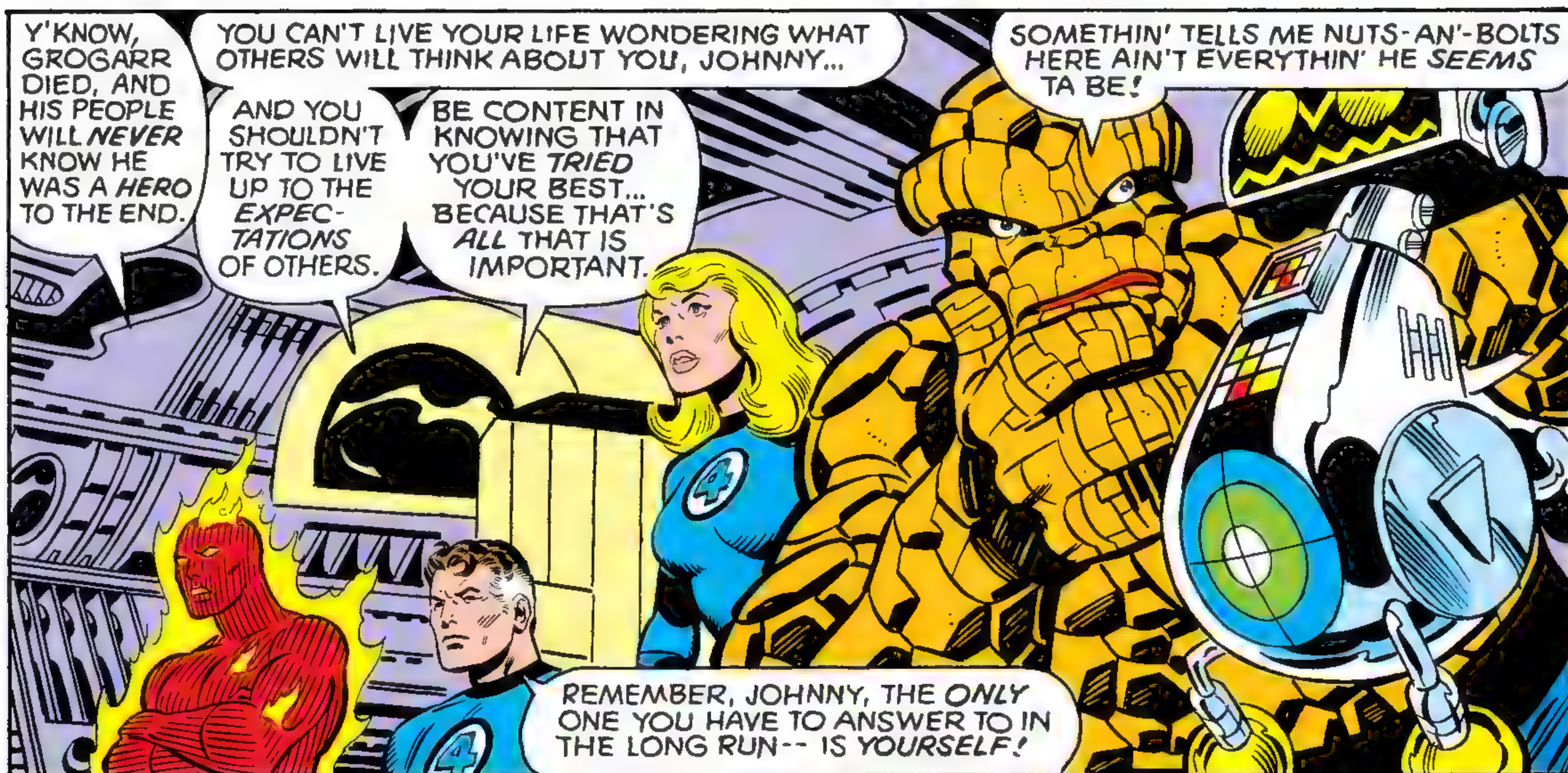
I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE, BEN! DO YOUR BEST!





THOUGH THERE ARE QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED, THE F.F. FIRST RETURNS TO THE DEMOLISHED ALIEN STARSHIP...





NEXT:
THE MOST MIND-BOGGLING TRIP OF ALL!
IN SEARCH OF GALACTUS!

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IN SEARCH OF
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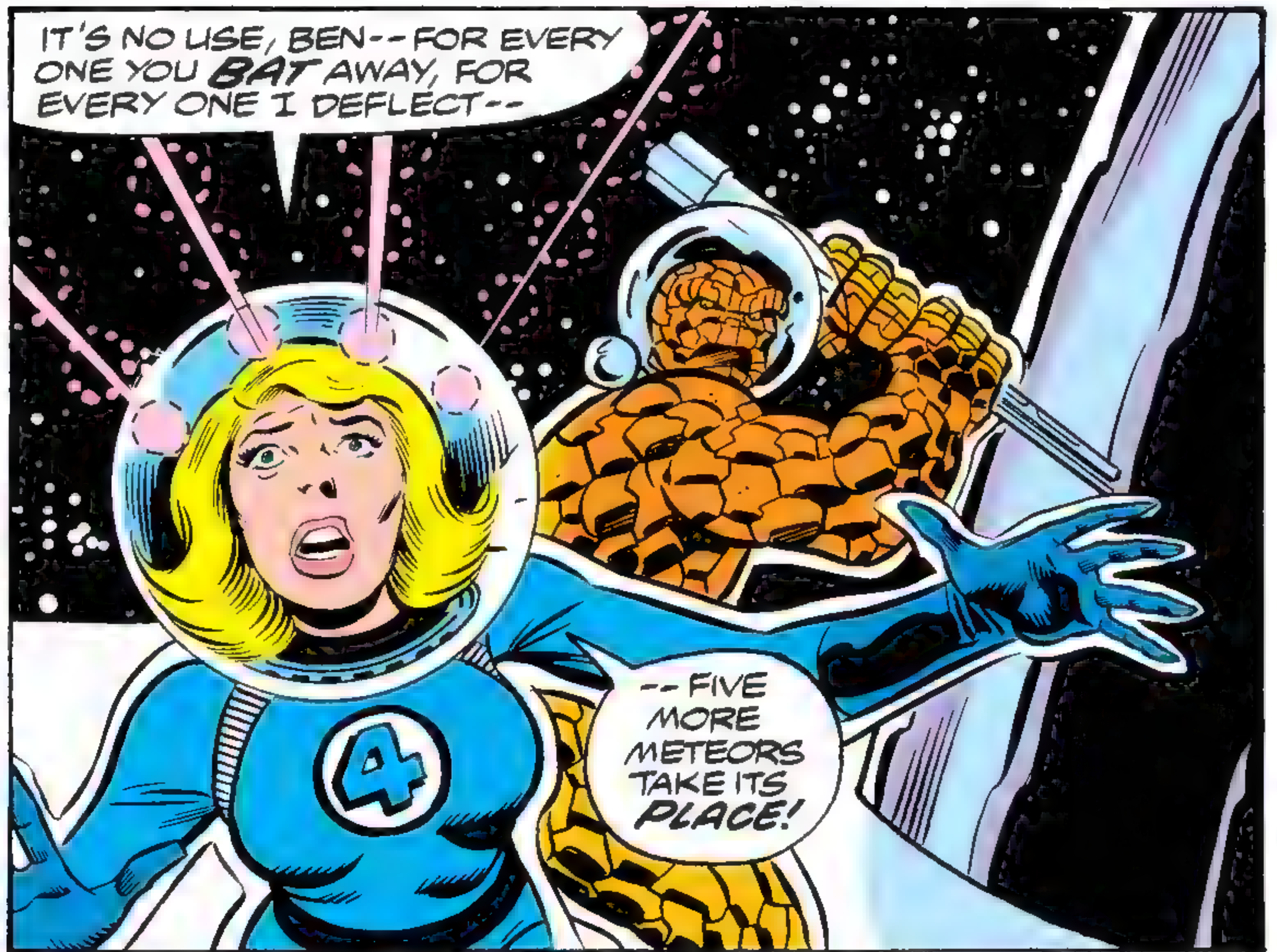
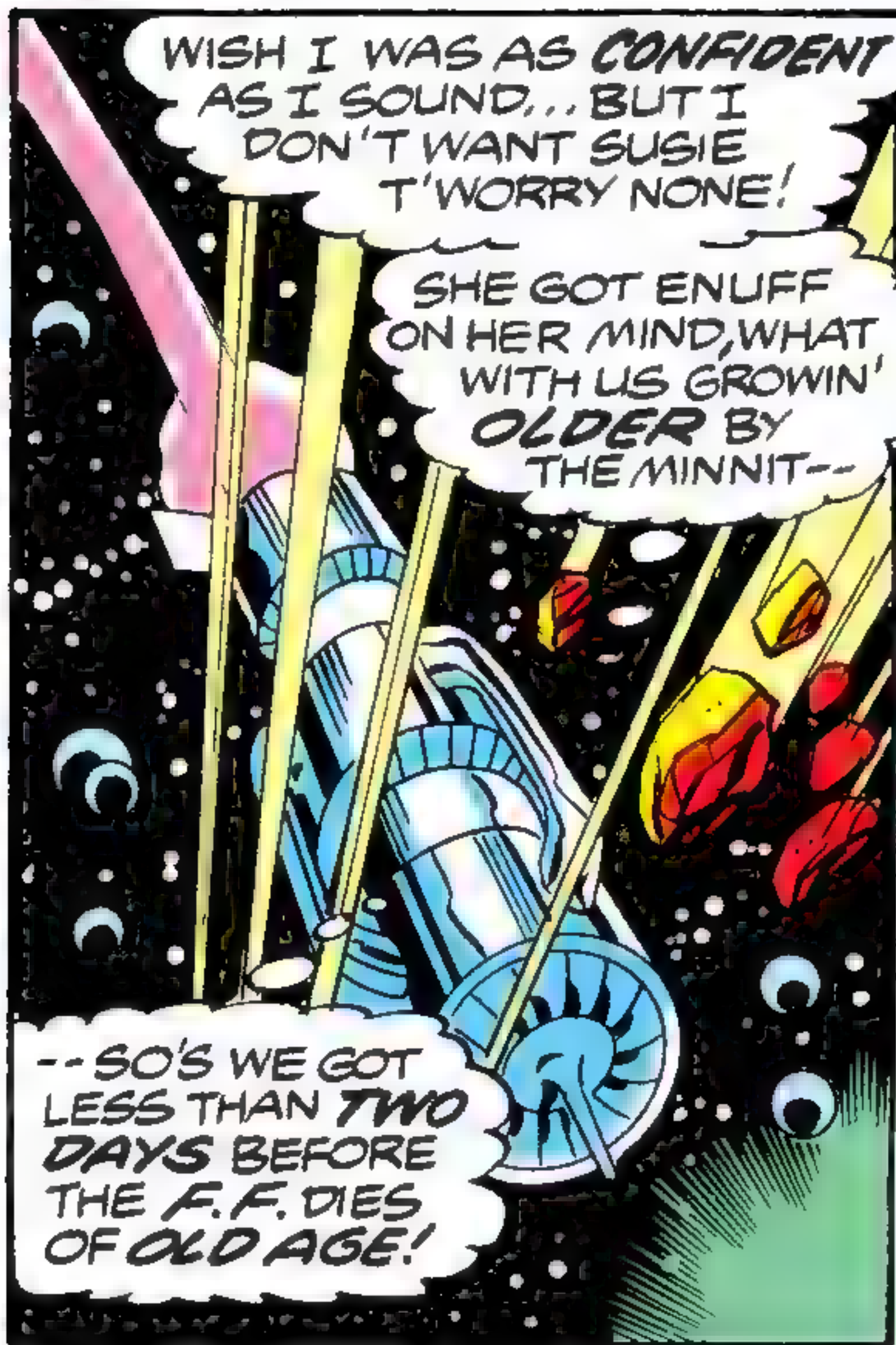


Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

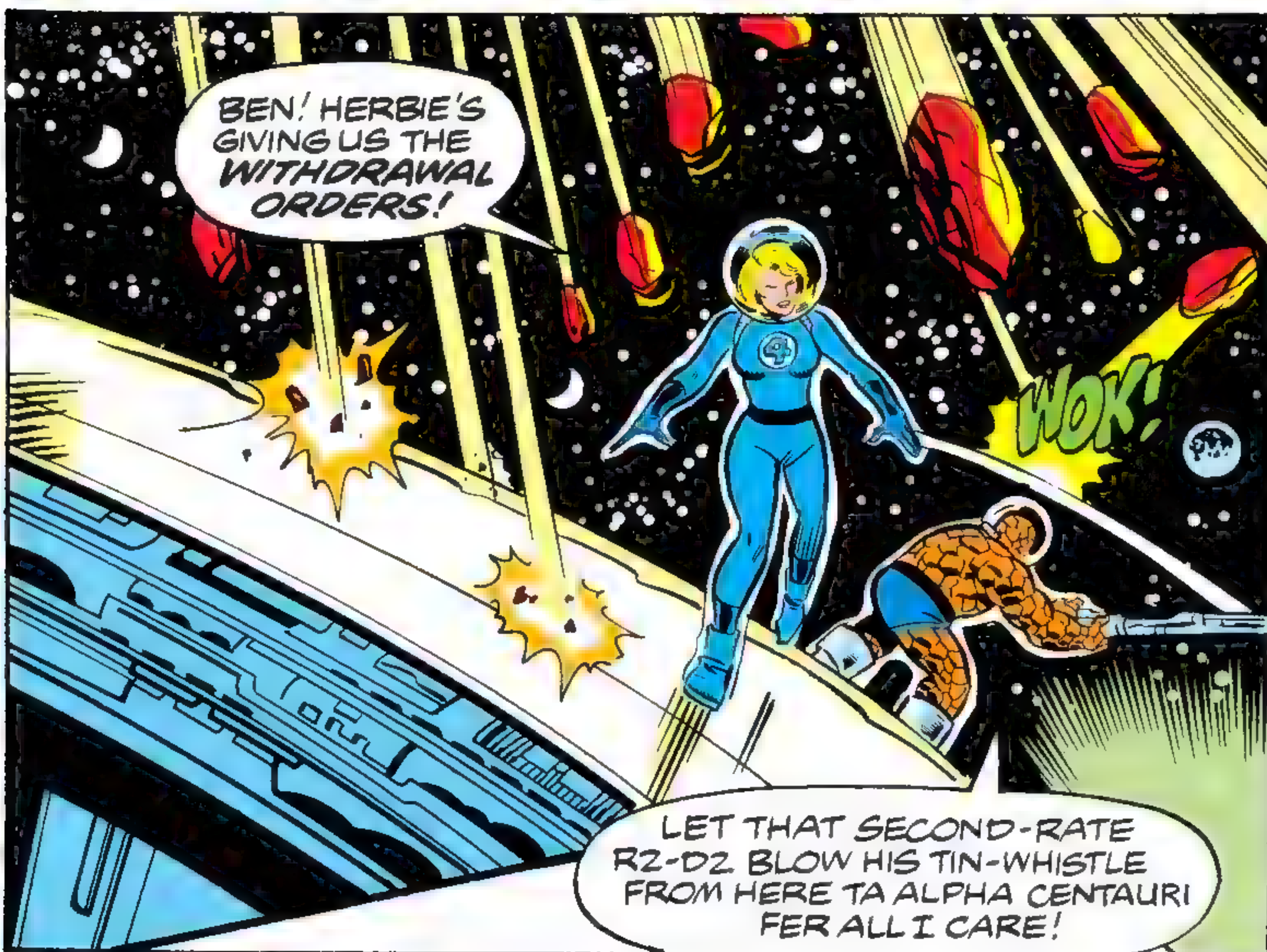
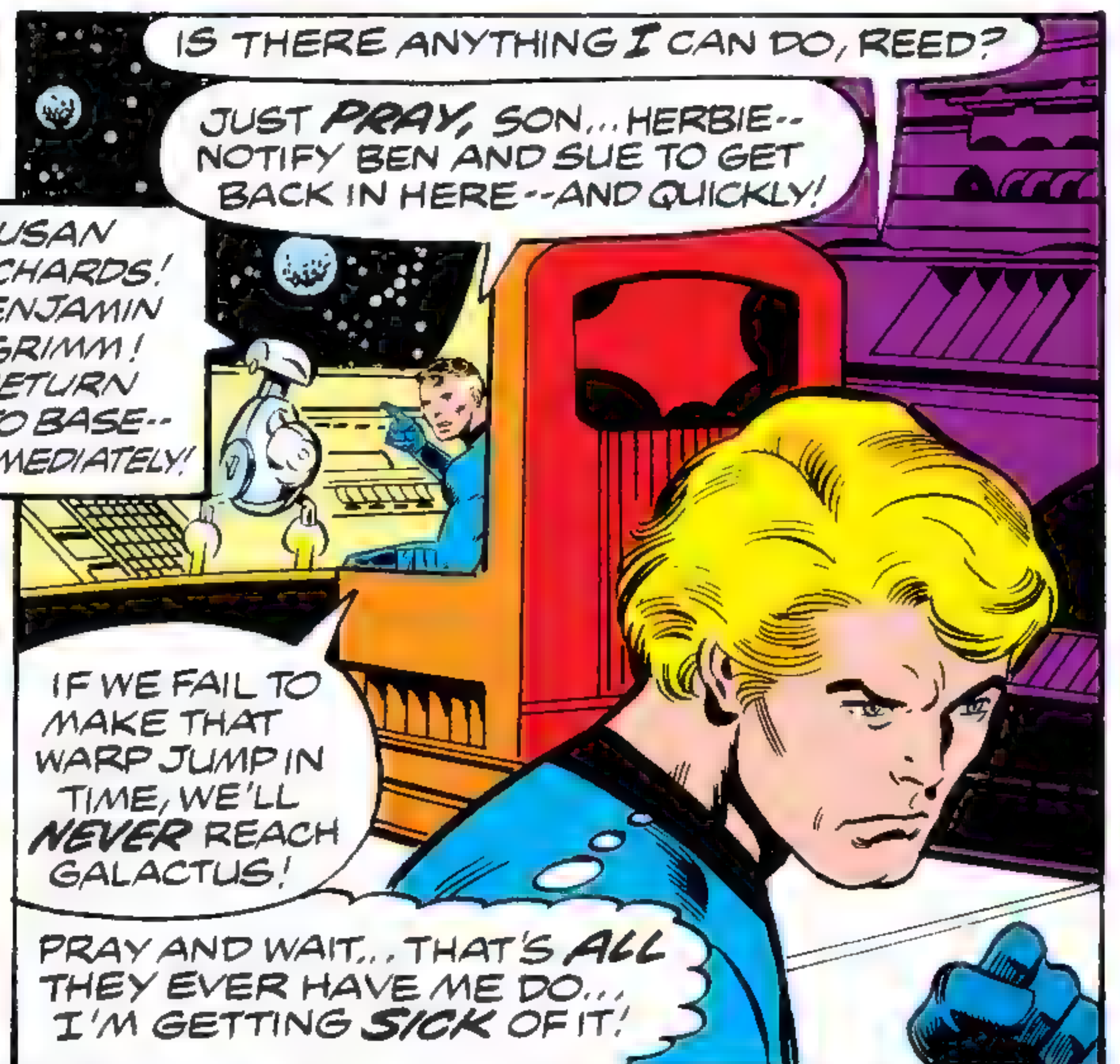
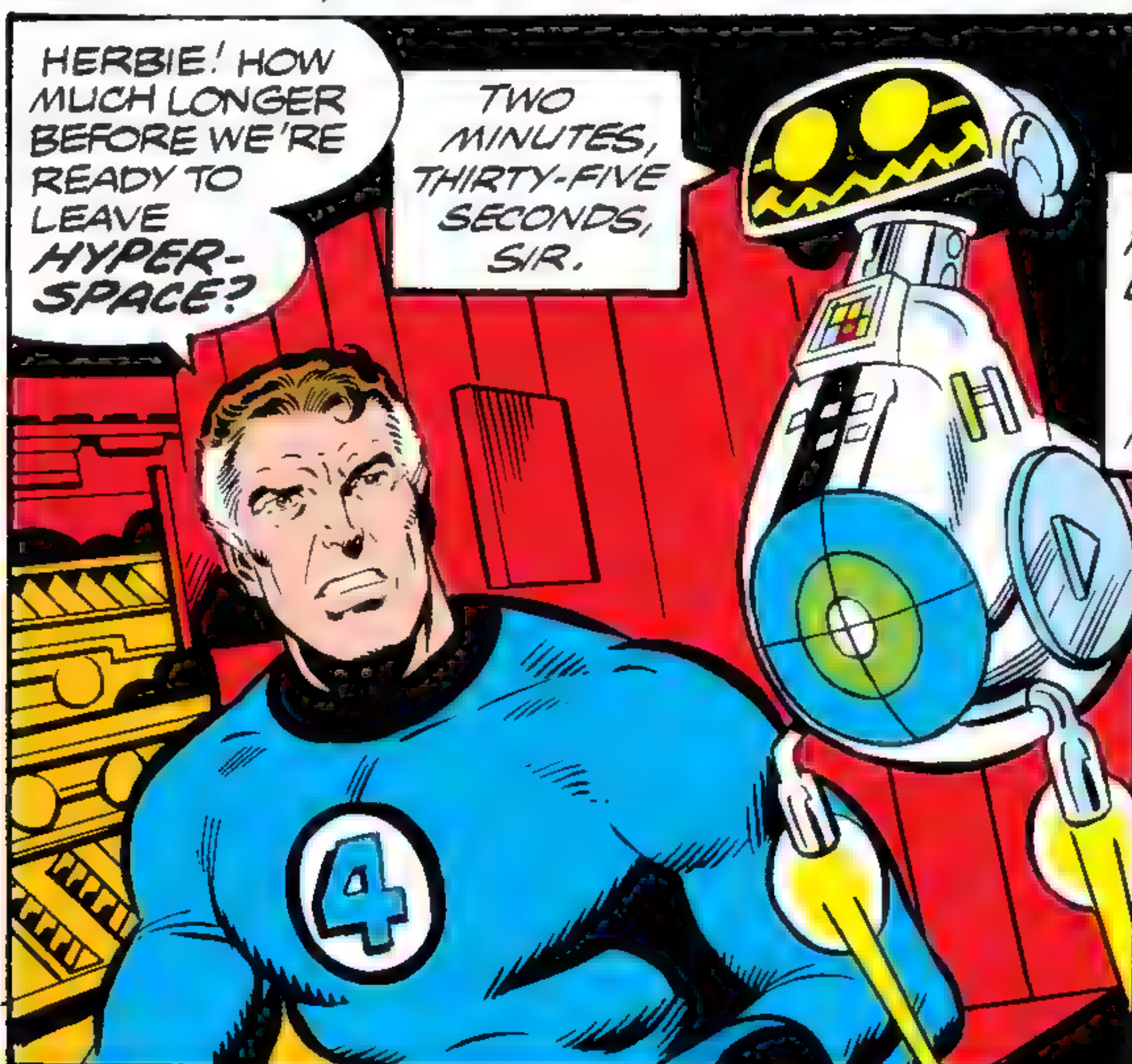
Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**®

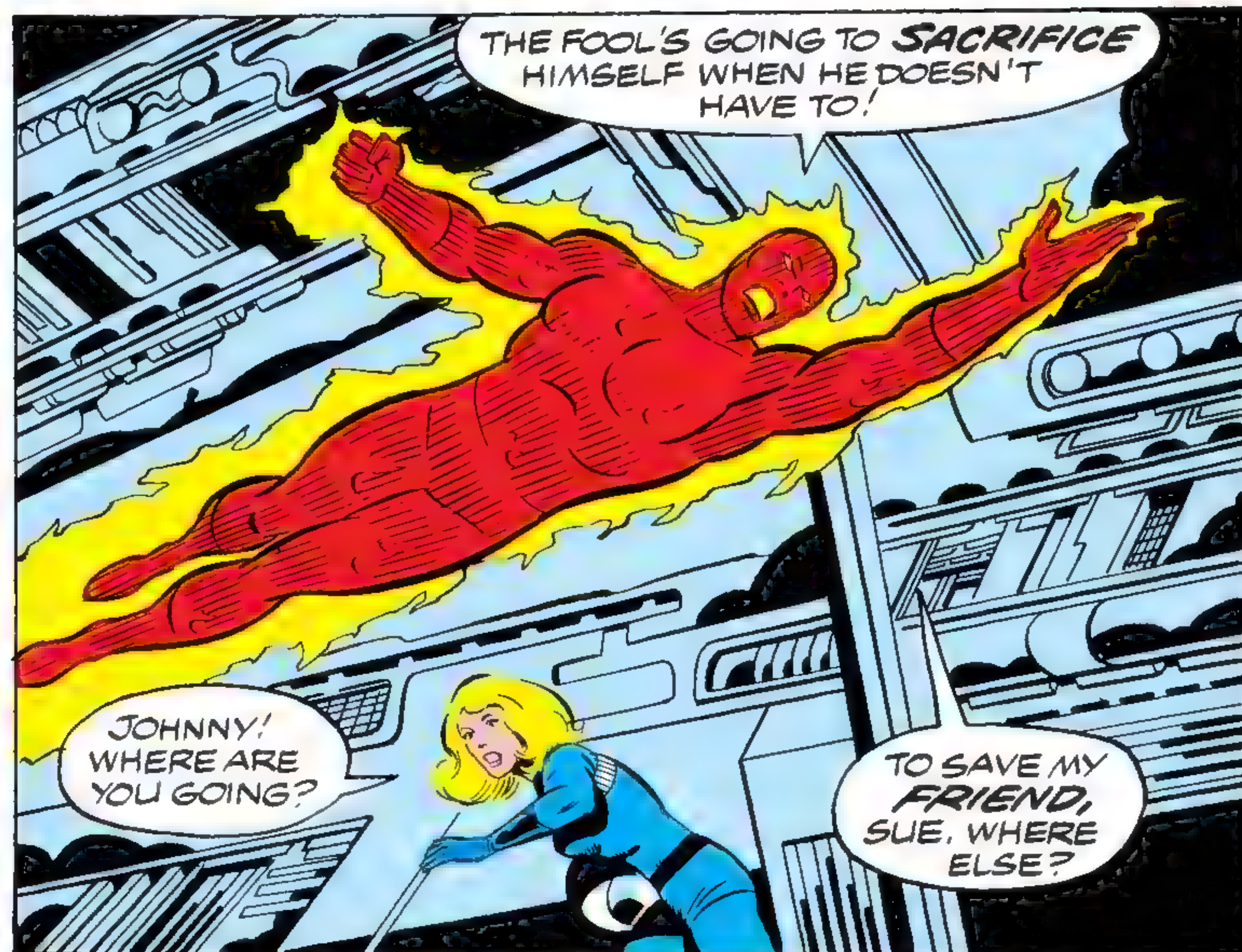
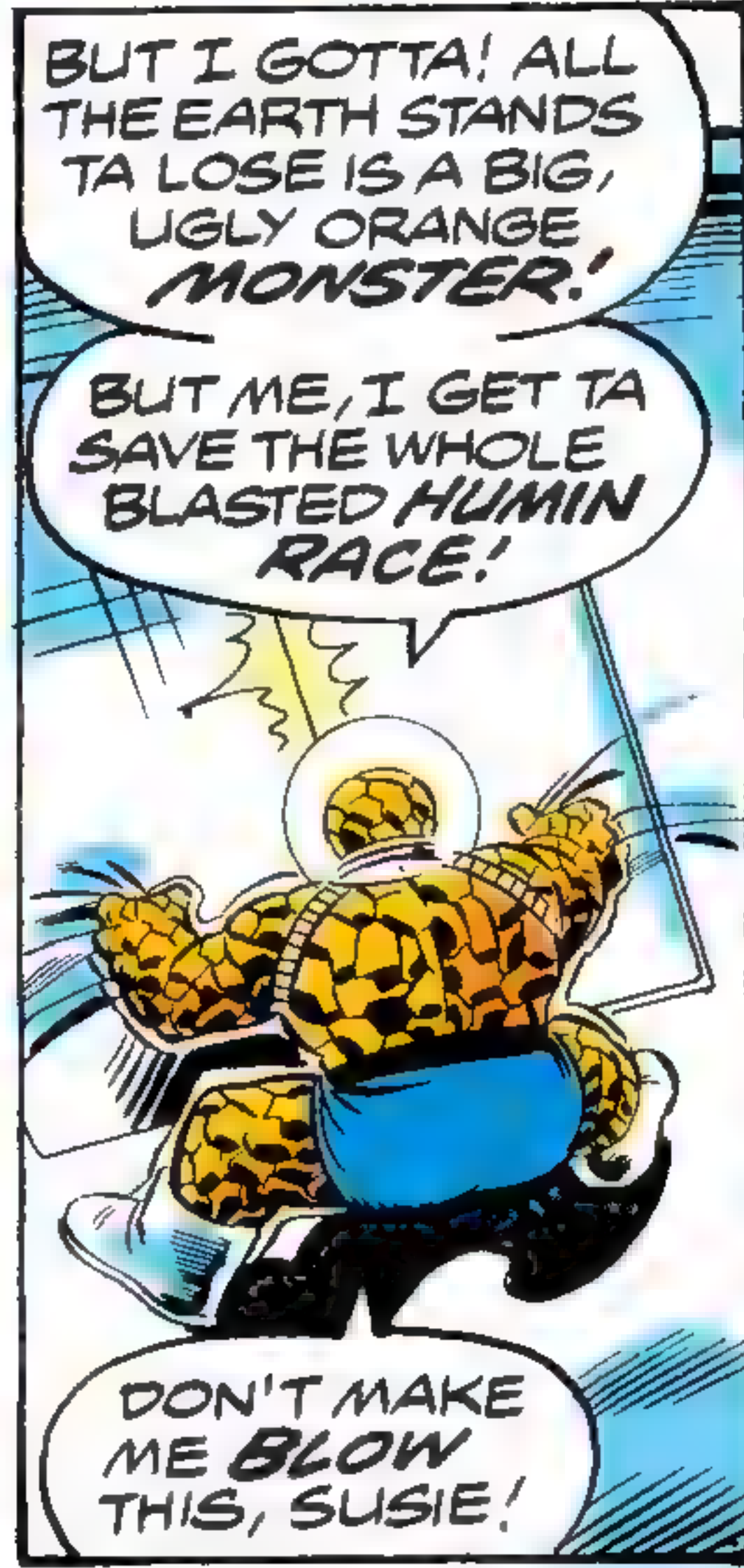
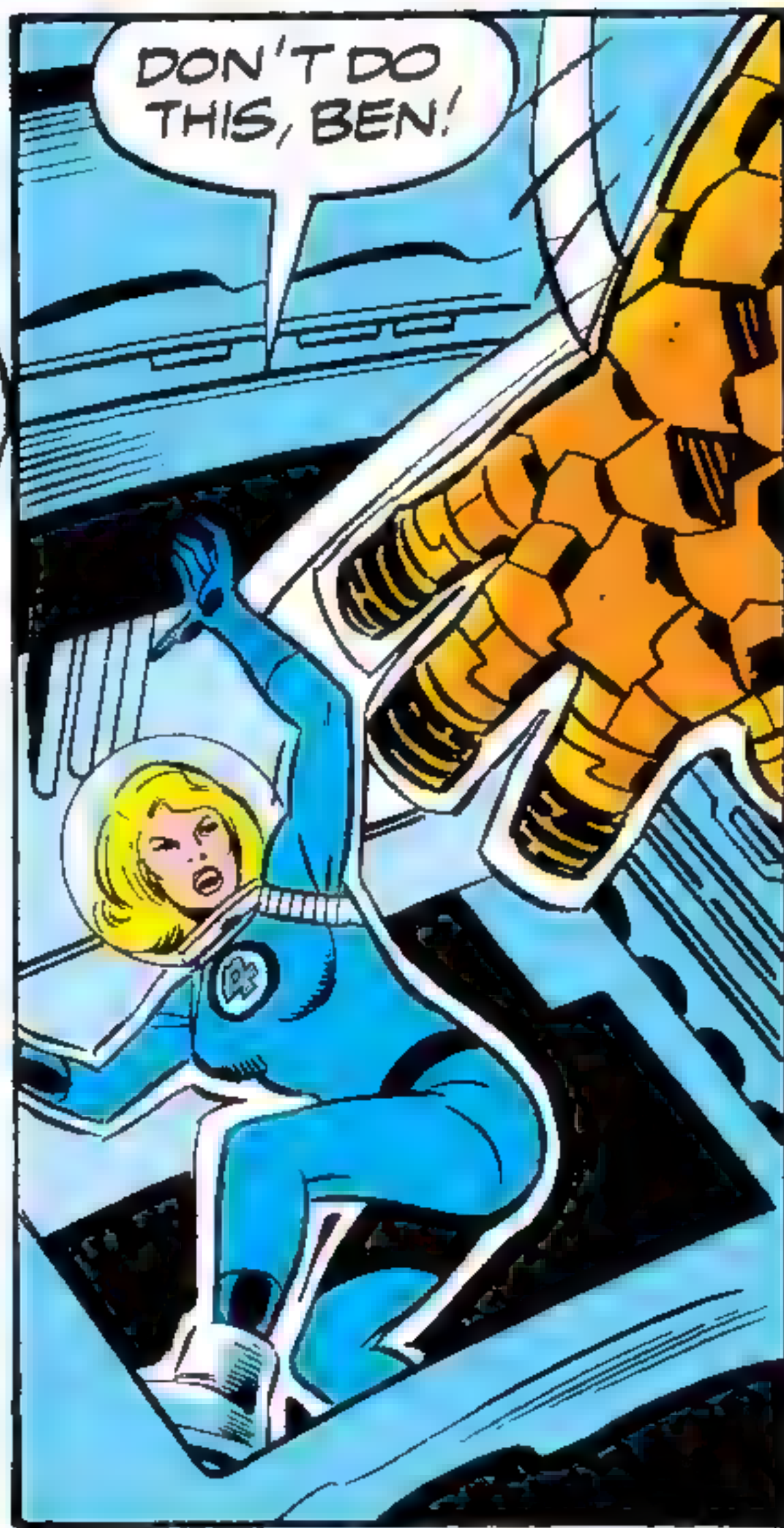
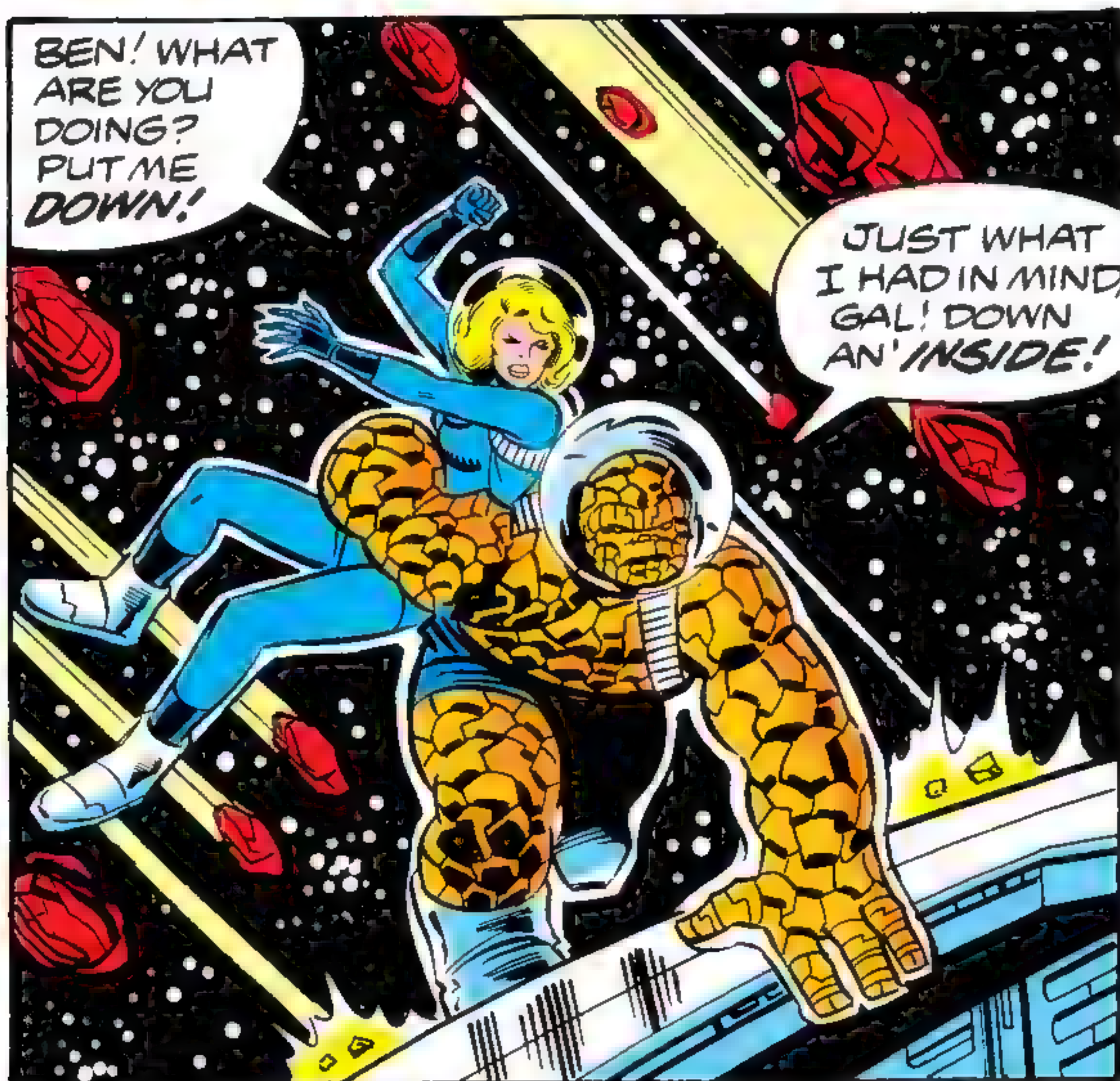
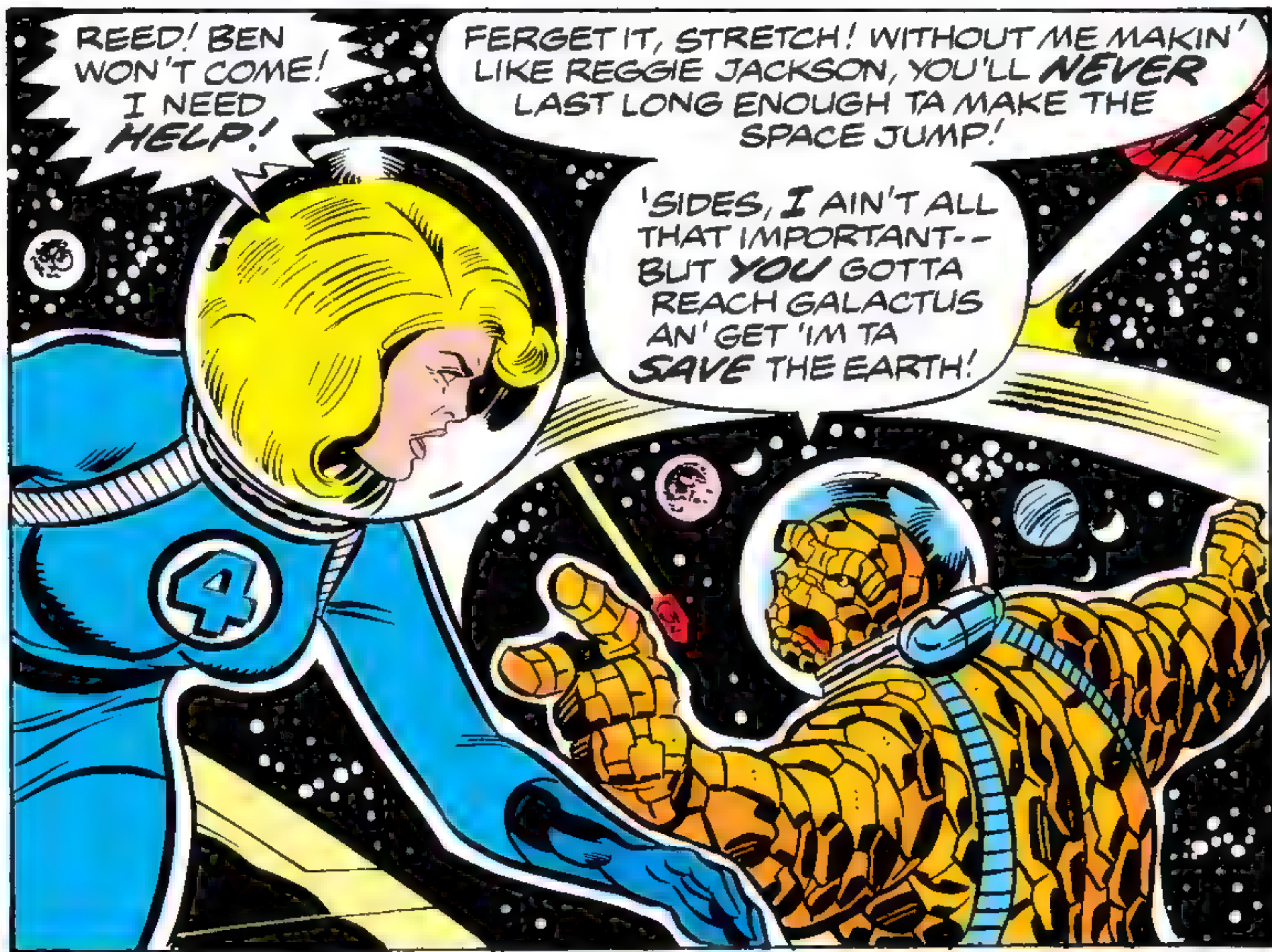
MARY WOLFGMAN, JOHN BYRNE, JOE SINNOTT, JOHN COSTANZA, BEN SEAN, JIM SHOOTER
WRITER/EDITOR LAYOUTS FINISHES letterer colorist CONSULTING ED.

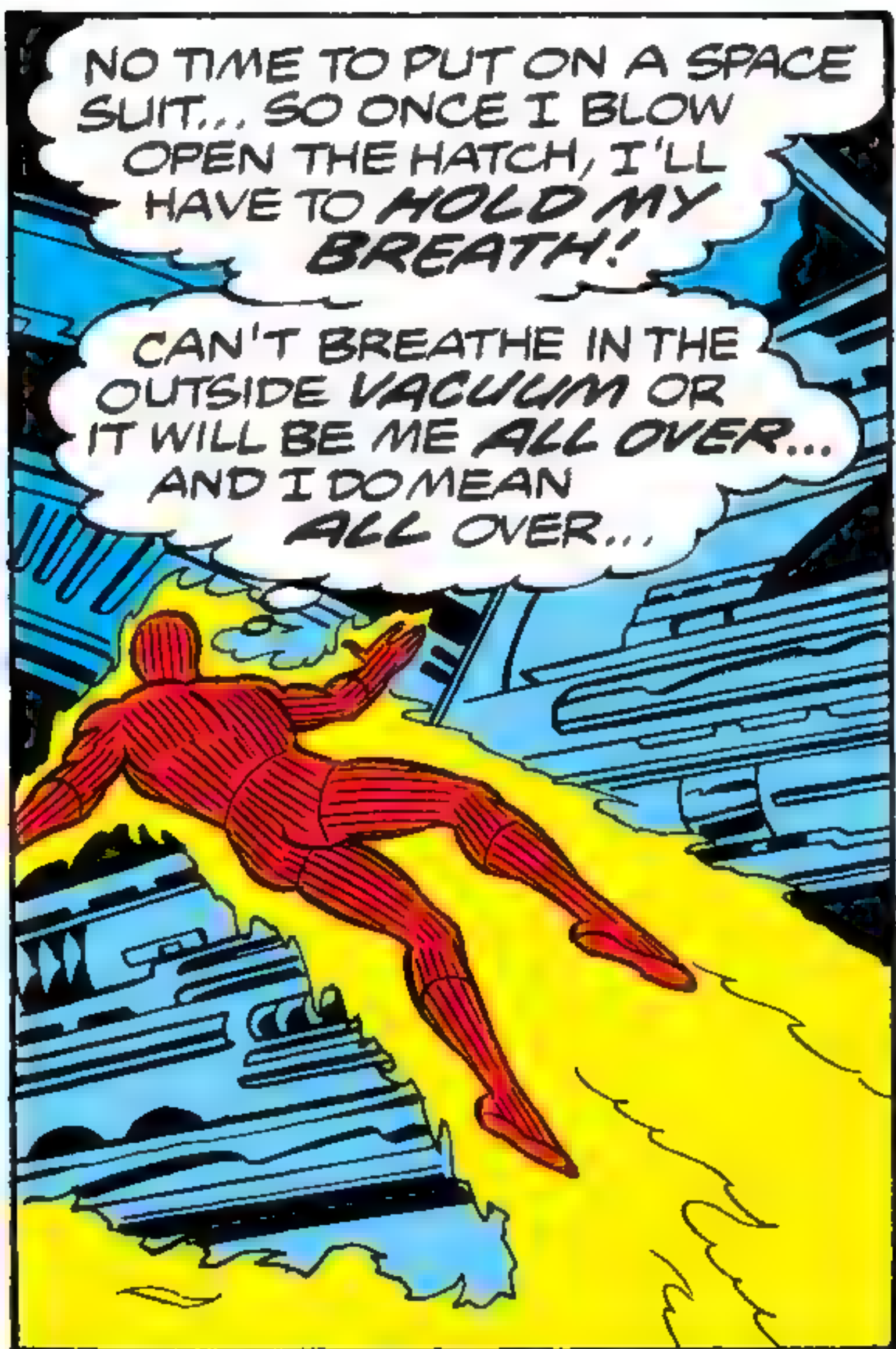




MEANWHILE, WITHIN THE GIANT STARSHIP...







NO TIME TO PUT ON A SPACE SUIT... SO ONCE I BLOW OPEN THE HATCH, I'LL HAVE TO **HOLD MY BREATH!**

CAN'T BREATHE IN THE OUTSIDE **VACUUM** OR IT WILL BE ME **ALL OVER...** AND I DO MEAN **ALL OVER...**

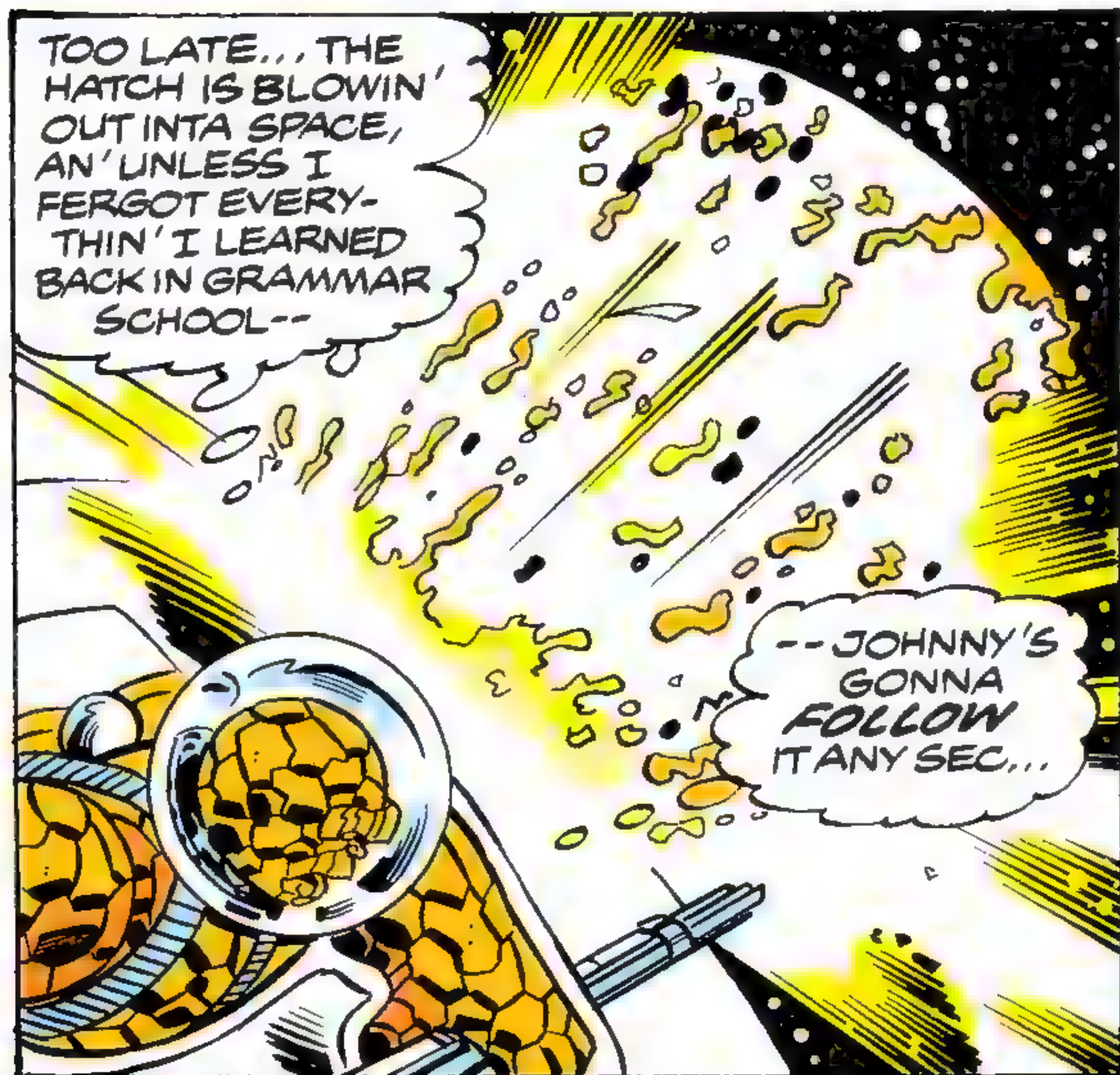


HUH? WHAT IN BLAZES? THE SHIP'S STARTIN' TA **BUBBLE** ALL AROUND.. OH, NO!

IT'S THAT **CRAZY KID!**



TORCHIE! **STOP** DON'T DO IT!



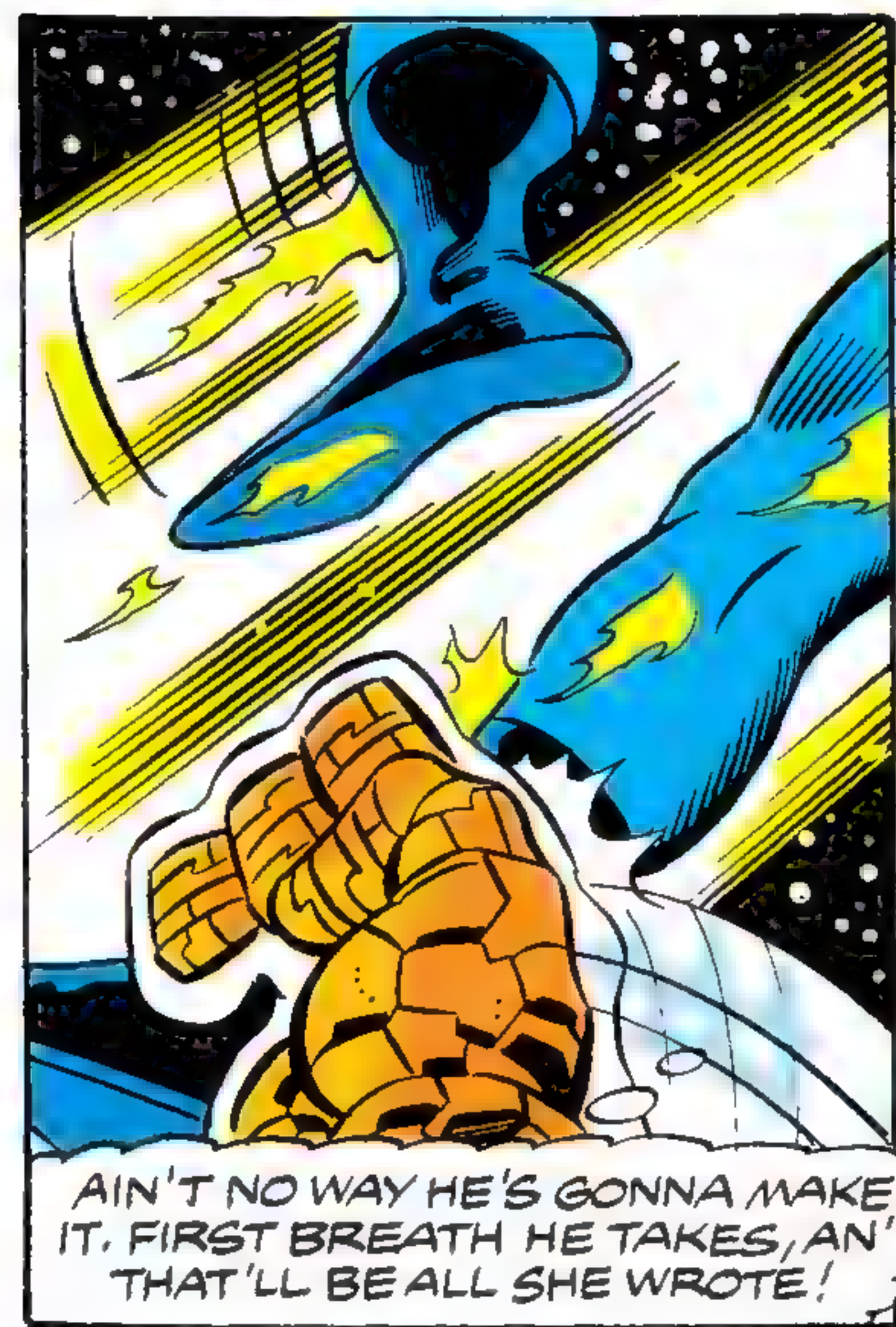
TOO LATE... THE HATCH IS BLOWIN' OUT INTO SPACE, AN' UNLESS I FERGOT EVERY-THIN' I LEARNED BACK IN GRAMMAR SCHOOL--

-- JOHNNY'S GONNA FOLLOW IT ANY SEC...

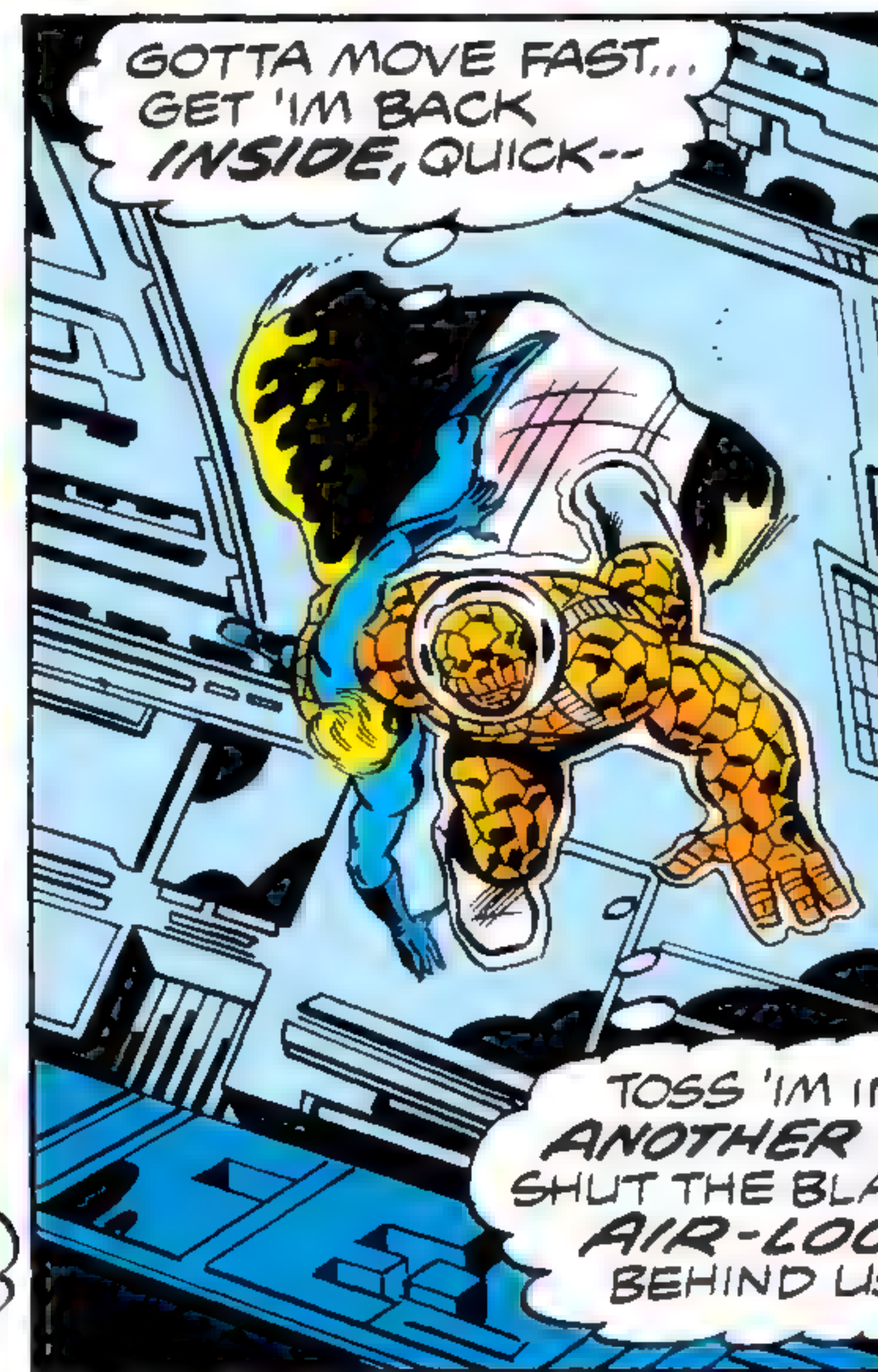


THERE HE GOES-- SHOOTIN' OUT INTO THE **VACUUM**-- CRIPES!

HE AIN'T WEARIN' A SPACE SUIT!

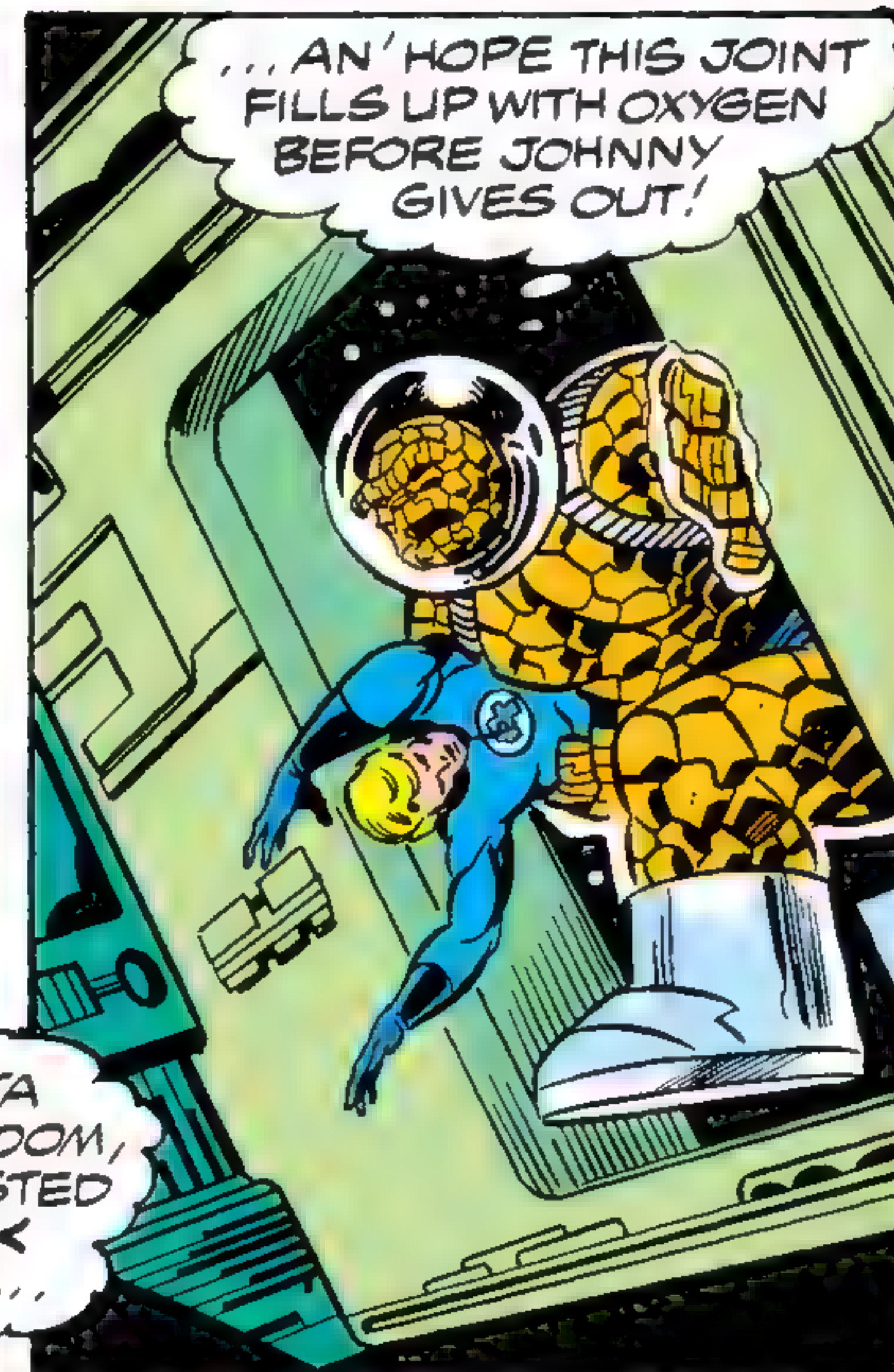


AIN'T NO WAY HE'S GONNA MAKE IT. FIRST BREATH HE TAKES, AN' THAT'LL BE ALL SHE WROTE!

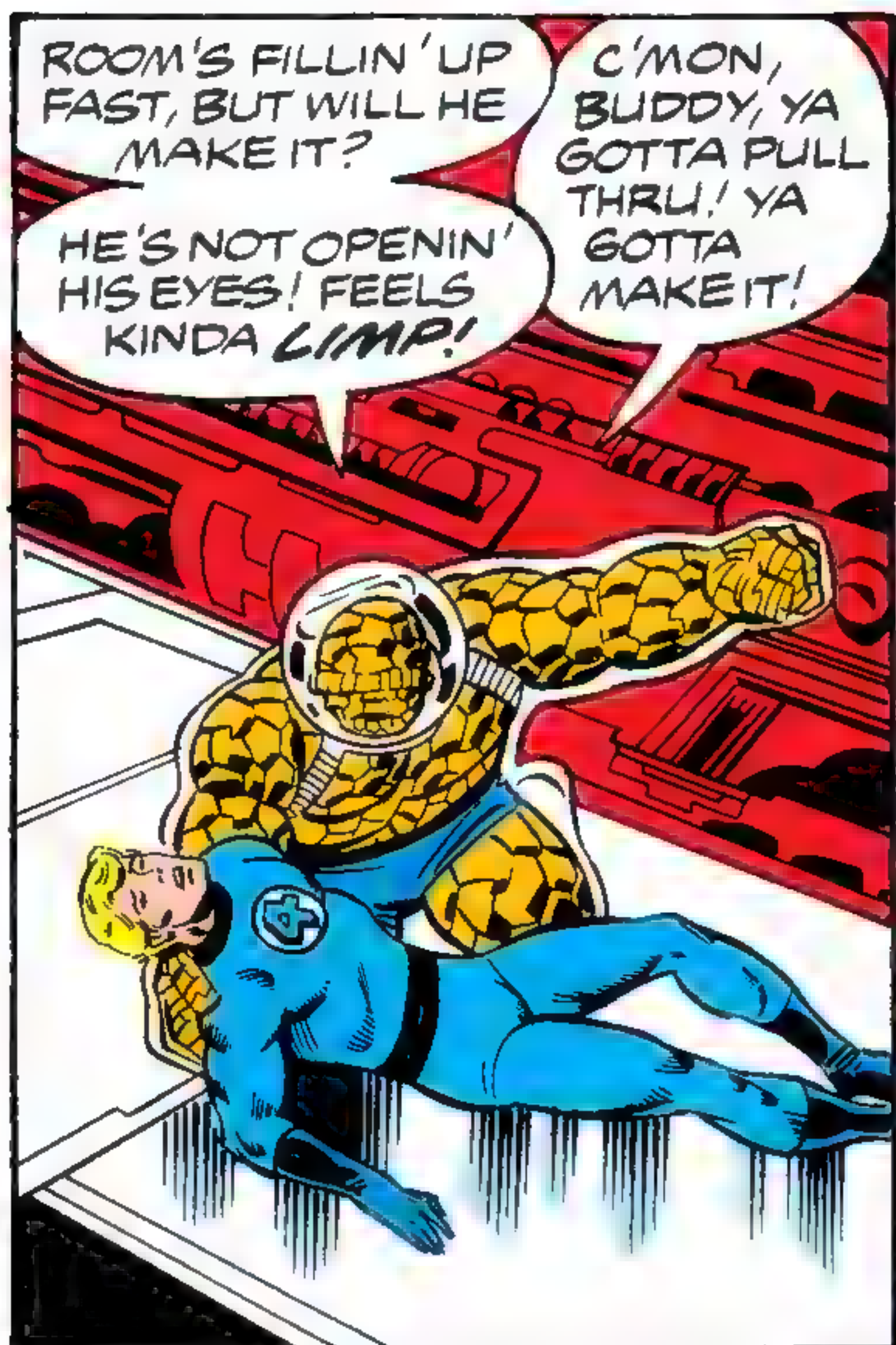


GOTTA MOVE FAST... GET 'IM BACK **INSIDE**, QUICK--

TOSS 'IM INTA **ANOTHER ROOM**, SHUT THE **BLASTED AIR-LOCK** BEHIND US...



... AN' HOPE THIS JOINT FILLS UP WITH **OXYGEN** BEFORE JOHNNY GIVES OUT!



ROOM'S FILLIN' UP FAST, BUT WILL HE MAKE IT?

HE'S NOT OPENIN' HIS EYES! FEELS KINDA LIMP!

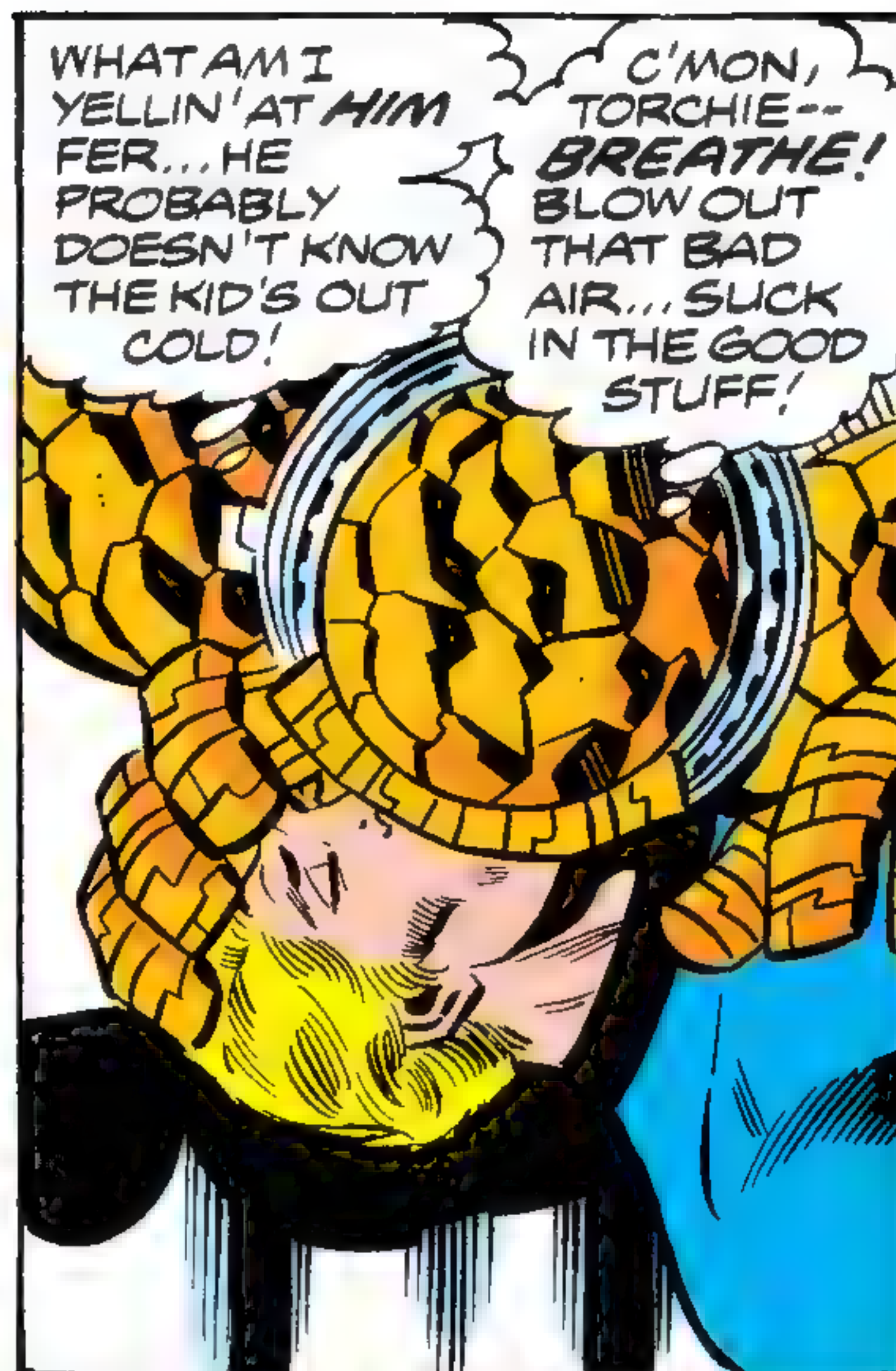
C'MON, BUDDY, YA GOTTA PULL THRU! YA GOTTA MAKE IT!



DO IT FER ME, YA BLASTED MATCHSTICK! FER HEAVEN'S SAKE--LIVE!

THANK GOODNESS, YOU'RE BOTH BACK! WE'RE MAKING THE SPACE JUMP!

SO MAKE IT AN' SHUT UP, AWREADY!



WHAT AM I YELLIN' AT HIM FER... HE PROBABLY DOESN'T KNOW THE KID'S OUT COLD!

C'MON, TORCHIE-- BREATHE! BLOW OUT THAT BAD AIR... SUCK IN THE GOOD STUFF!



HEY, I FEEL 'IM STIRRIN' HIS CHEST'S BEGINNIN' TA HEAVE!

GOTTA KEEP THIS UP... GOTTA MAKE 'IM BREATHE...

HE ALMOST GOT HIMSELF KILLED 'CAUSE 'A ME... I AIN'T NEVER GONNA FERGET IT...



UNGH... SURE YOU WILL, BIG FELLA... THE NEXT TIME I DO ANYTHING THAT MIFFS YOU...

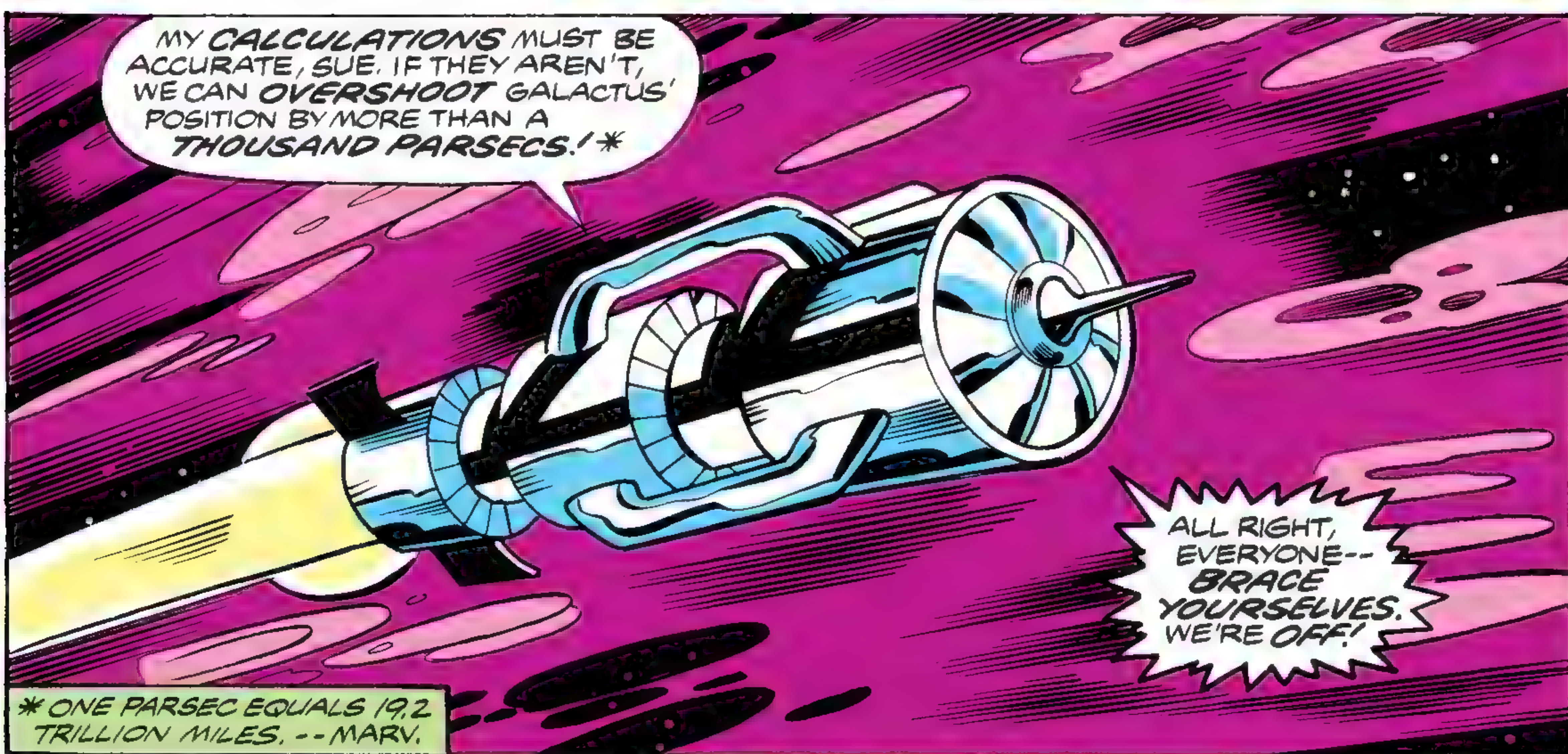
JOHNNY! YER ALIVE!

THANKS TO YOU, BUDDY...



MEANWHILE...

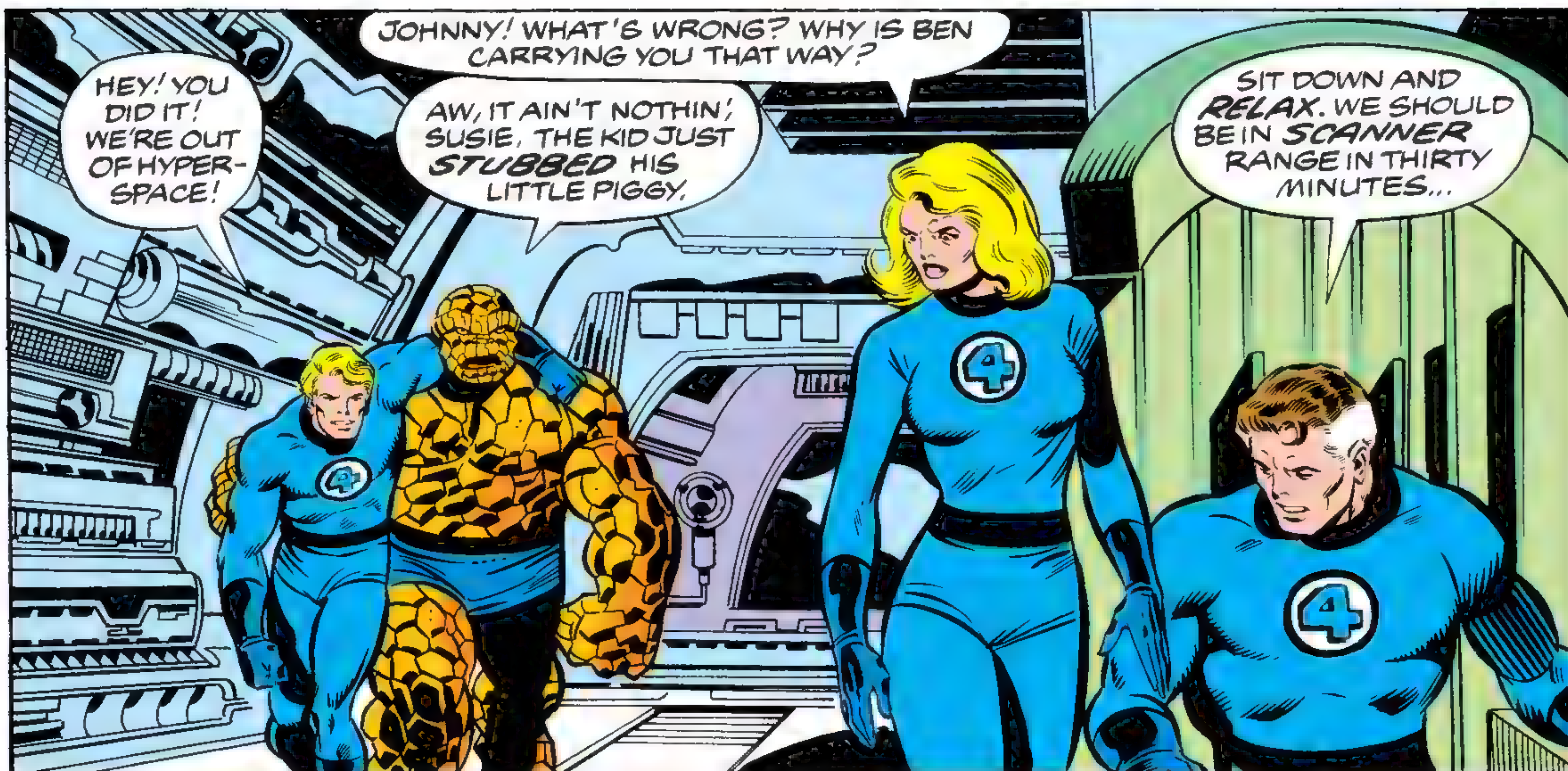
EVERYONE'S INSIDE, REED... WE CAN MAKE THE JUMP.



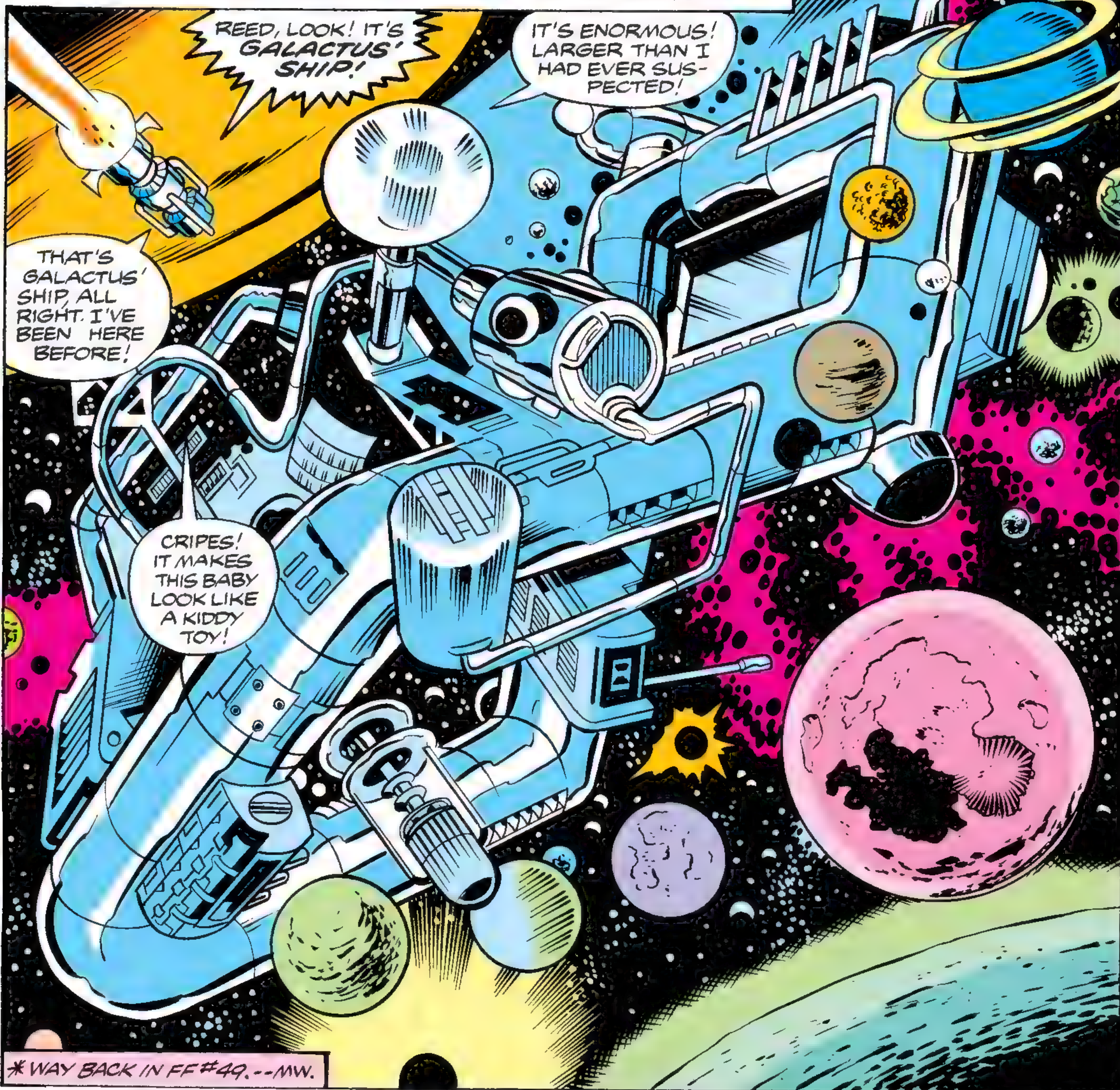
MY CALCULATIONS MUST BE ACCURATE, SUE. IF THEY AREN'T, WE CAN OVERTHROW GALACTUS' POSITION BY MORE THAN A THOUSAND PARSECS! *

ALL RIGHT, EVERYONE-- BRACE YOURSELVES. WE'RE OFF!

* ONE PARSEC EQUALS 19.2 TRILLION MILES. -- MARV.

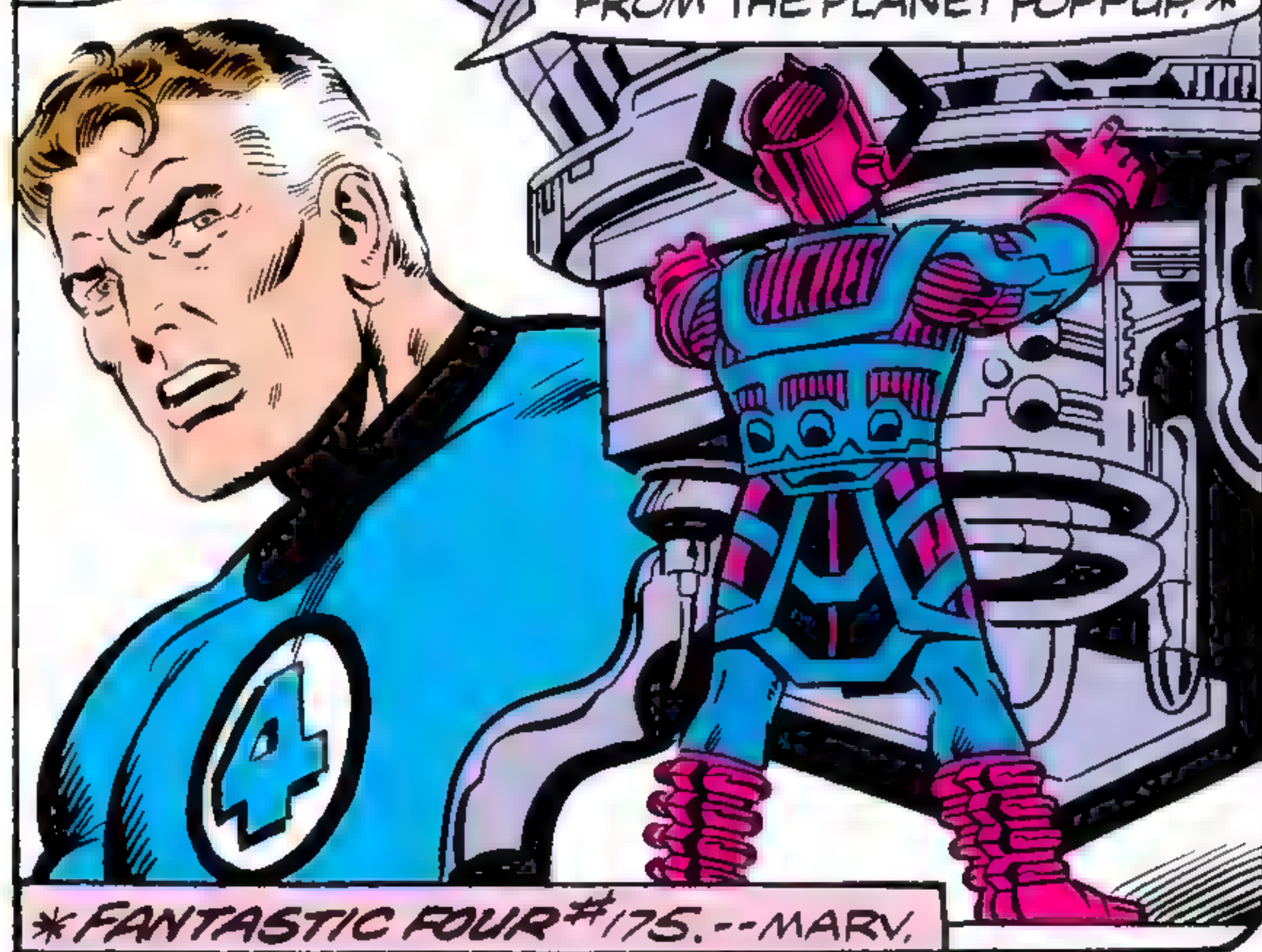


THE MILE-LONG STARSHIP ROCKETS ON, THEN, HALF AN HOUR LATER...



SO, YOU WUZ RIGHT ALL ALONG. HOW'D YOU KNOW GALLY WASN'T PUSHIN' UP DAISIES LIKE WE ALL THOUGHT?

TRY TO REMEMBER, BEN. GALACTUS WAS ABOARD HIS SHIP, HIS MACHINES WERE ABSORBING ORGANIC ENERGY FROM THE PLANET POPPUR.*



*FANTASTIC FOUR #175.--MARV.

"AT THAT MOMENT HE LET FORTH WITH A SCREAM BORN OF AGONY AND SHEER DESPAIR."



THE WORLD HE WAS CONSUMING-- WAS KILLING HIM!

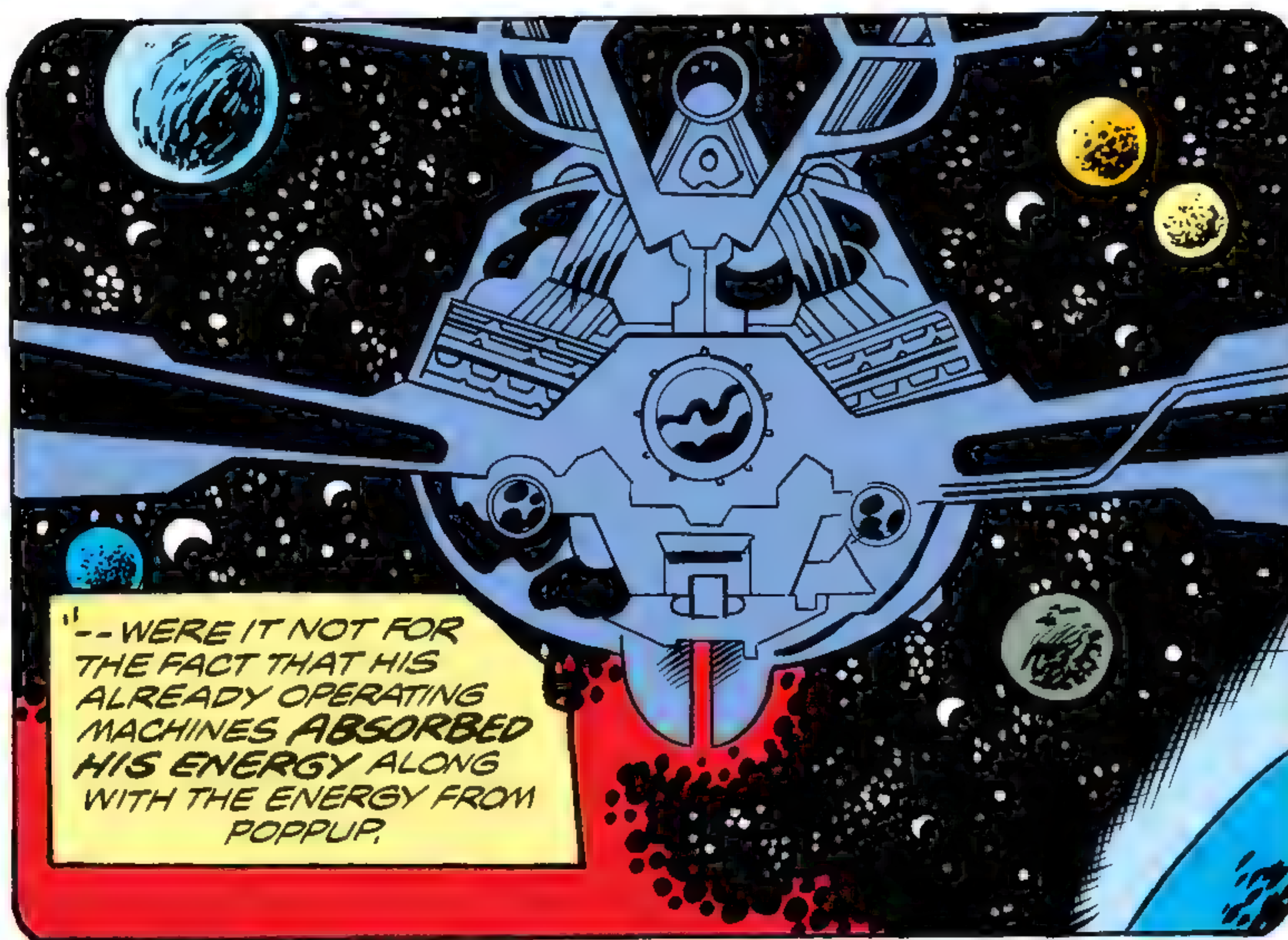
"TO SAVE HIM, THE HIGH EVOLUTION-ARY EVOLVED GALACTUS... FIRST FROM A HUMANOID INTO A HUGE, PUL-SATING BRAIN..."



"... THEN, FINALLY, INTO HARM-LESS INORGANIC ENERGY WHICH WOULD NORMALLY DIS-SIPATE THROUGH THE UNIVERSE--"

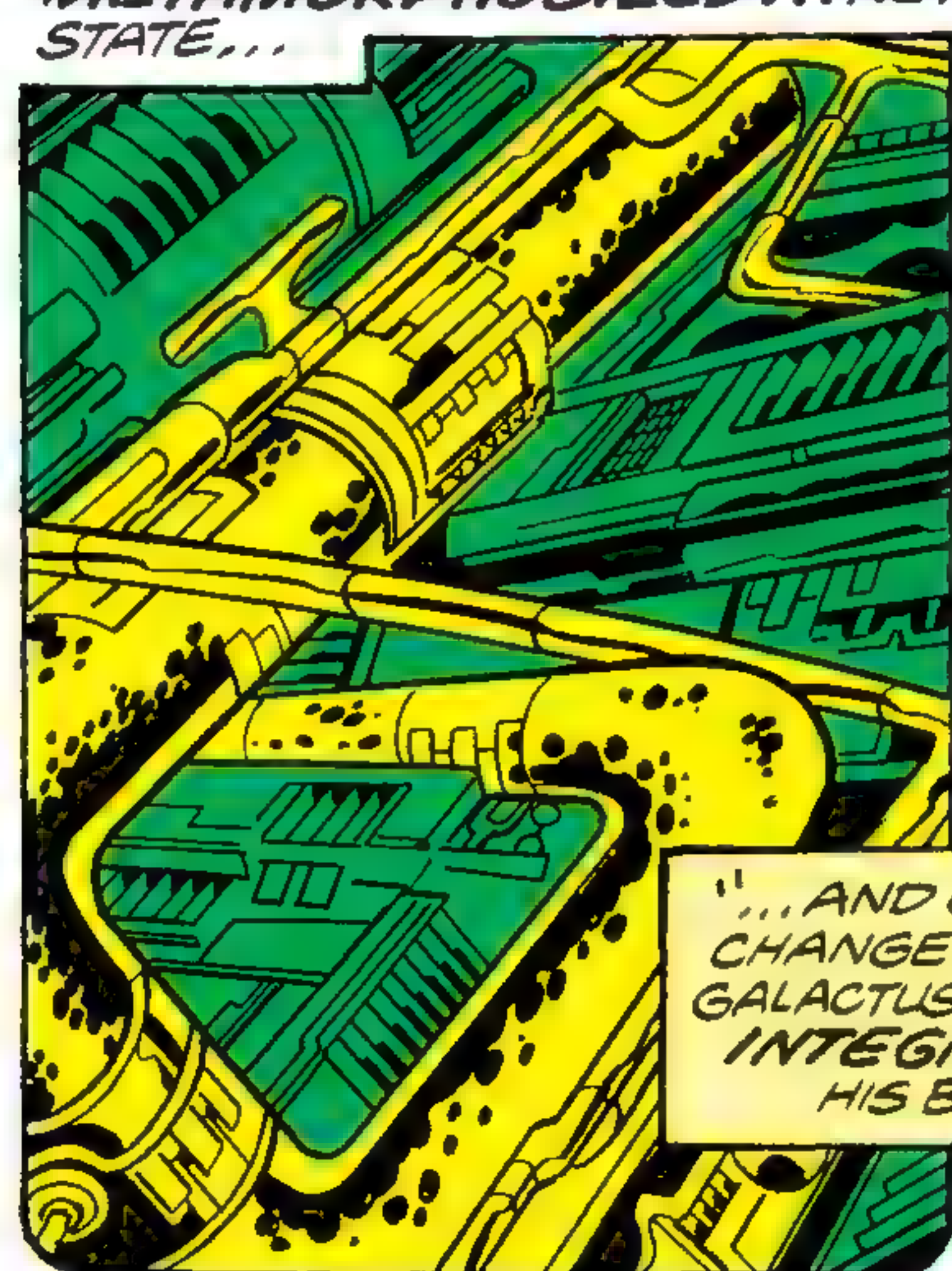
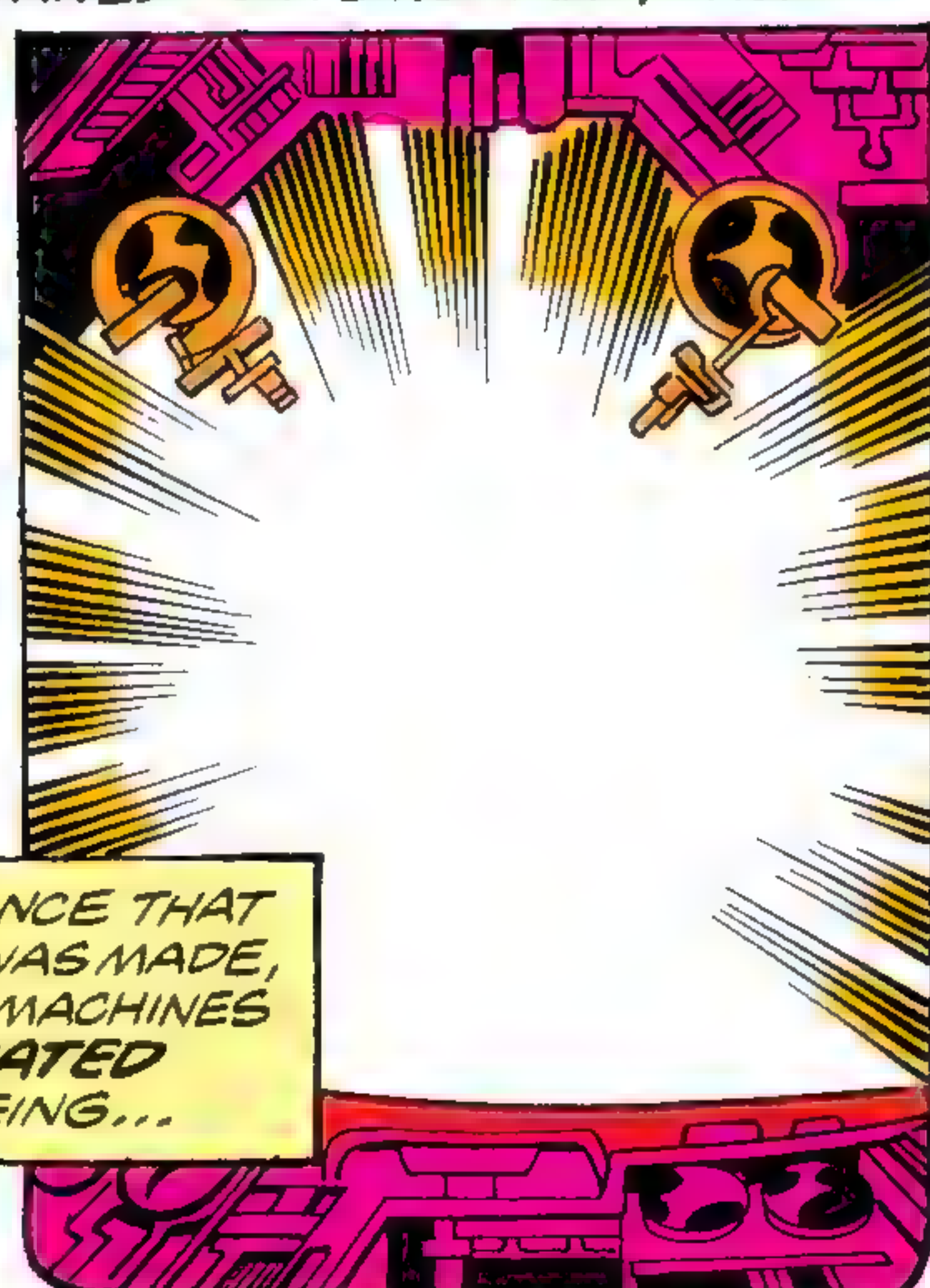


-- WERE IT NOT FOR THE FACT THAT HIS ALREADY OPERATING MACHINES ABSORBED HIS ENERGY ALONG WITH THE ENERGY FROM POPPUR,



"HIS INORGANIC PRESENCE WAS CONTAINED... IT COMBINED WITH POPPUR'S ORGANIC ENERGY... THEN, SLOWLY, IT MUST HAVE METAMORPHOSIZED... RETURNED TO ITS NORMAL, ORGANIC STATE..."

... AND ONCE THAT CHANGE WAS MADE, GALACTUS' MACHINES INTEGRATED HIS BEING...

"HE WAS, SIMPLY PUT-- RECREATED!"



AWRIGHT, I'LL BUY THAT, BUT IT STILL DON'T EXPLAIN HOW **YOU** KNEW HE WUZ BACK!

AFTER OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH GALACTUS, I CREATED A **WARNING** SIGNAL ATTUNED TO HIS ALIEN METABOLISM.

WHEN WE RETURNED TO THE BAXTER BUILDING AFTER OUR RUN-IN WITH DOCTOR DOOM, I NOTICED IT WAS **ACTIVATED**.

SO WHY DIDN'T YA TELL US THAT BEFORE NOW?

THERE WASN'T ANY NEED TO. GALACTUS'S EXISTENCE ISN'T A **THREAT** TO US... REMEMBER, I MADE HIM VOW NEVER TO RETURN TO OUR PLANET AGAIN.

DO YOU THINK HE'LL HELP US, REED?

BUT NOW I'VE GOT TO **MAKE** HIM RETURN... IT'S THE EARTH'S ONLY HOPE.

GALACTUS IS AN **ENIGMA**, SUE. YOU CAN'T PREDICT HIS ACTIONS.

BUT WITHOUT HIS INCREDIBLE POWER, THERE IS NO WAY FOR US TO DEFEAT THE RE-VITALIZED **SPHINX**!

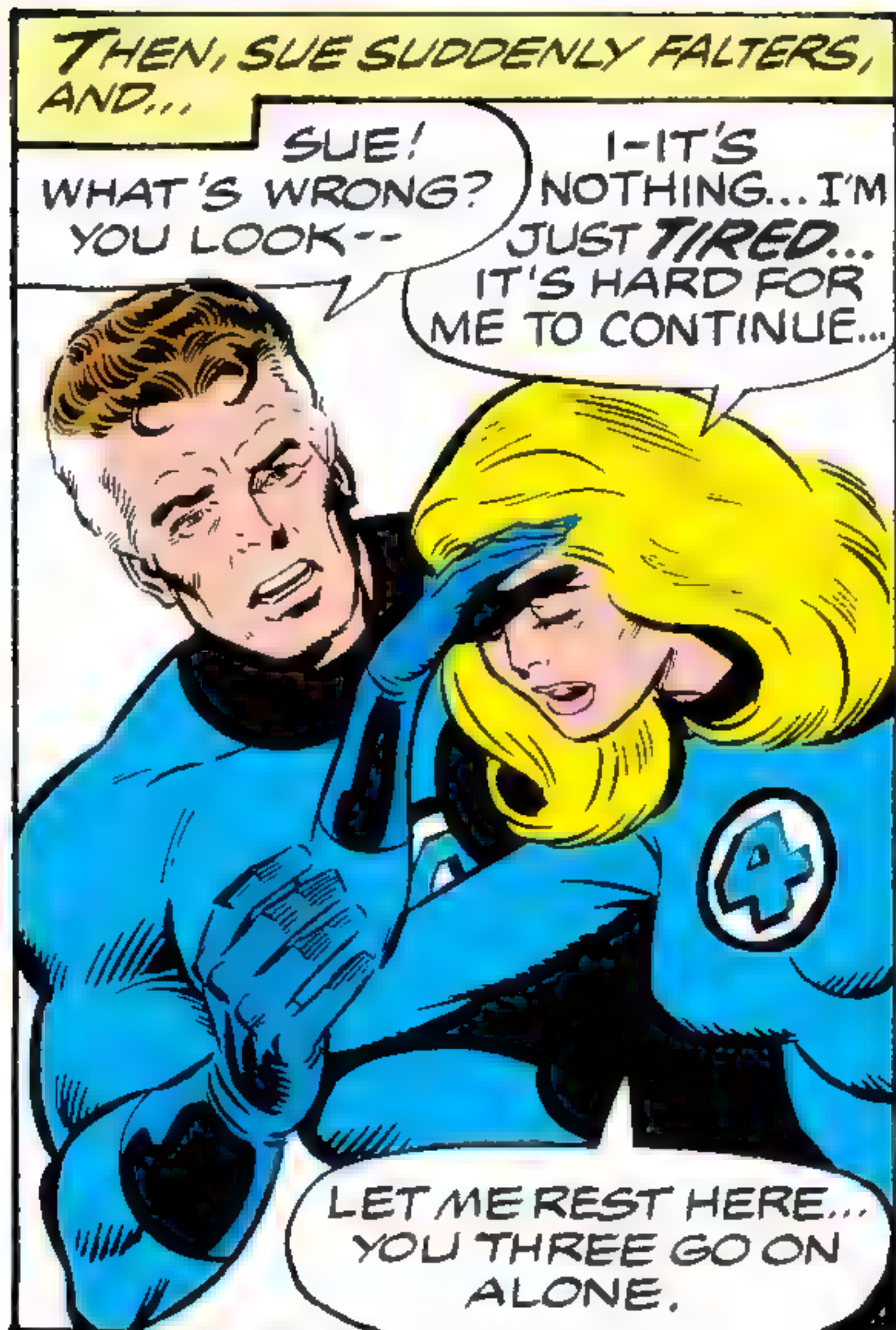
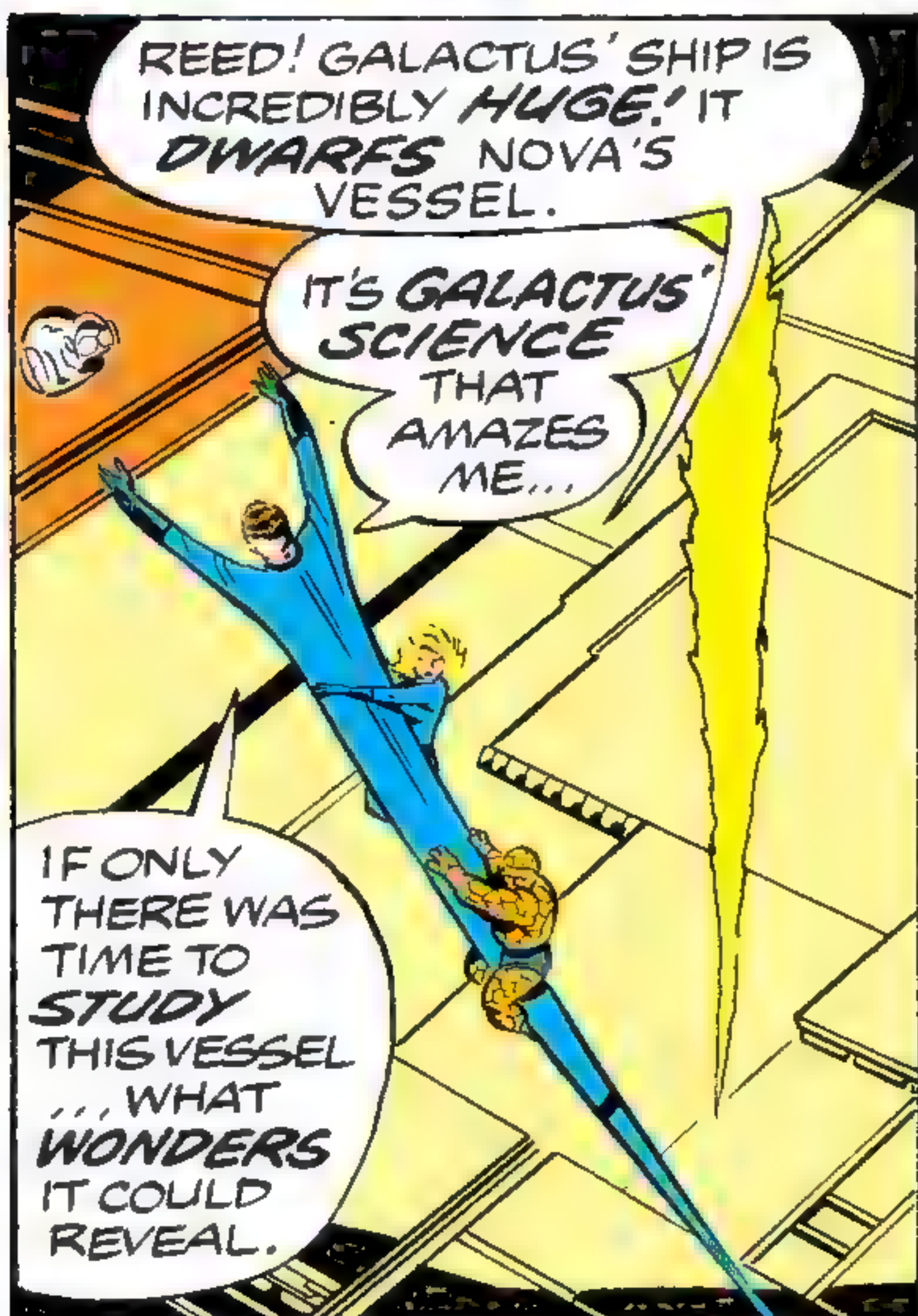
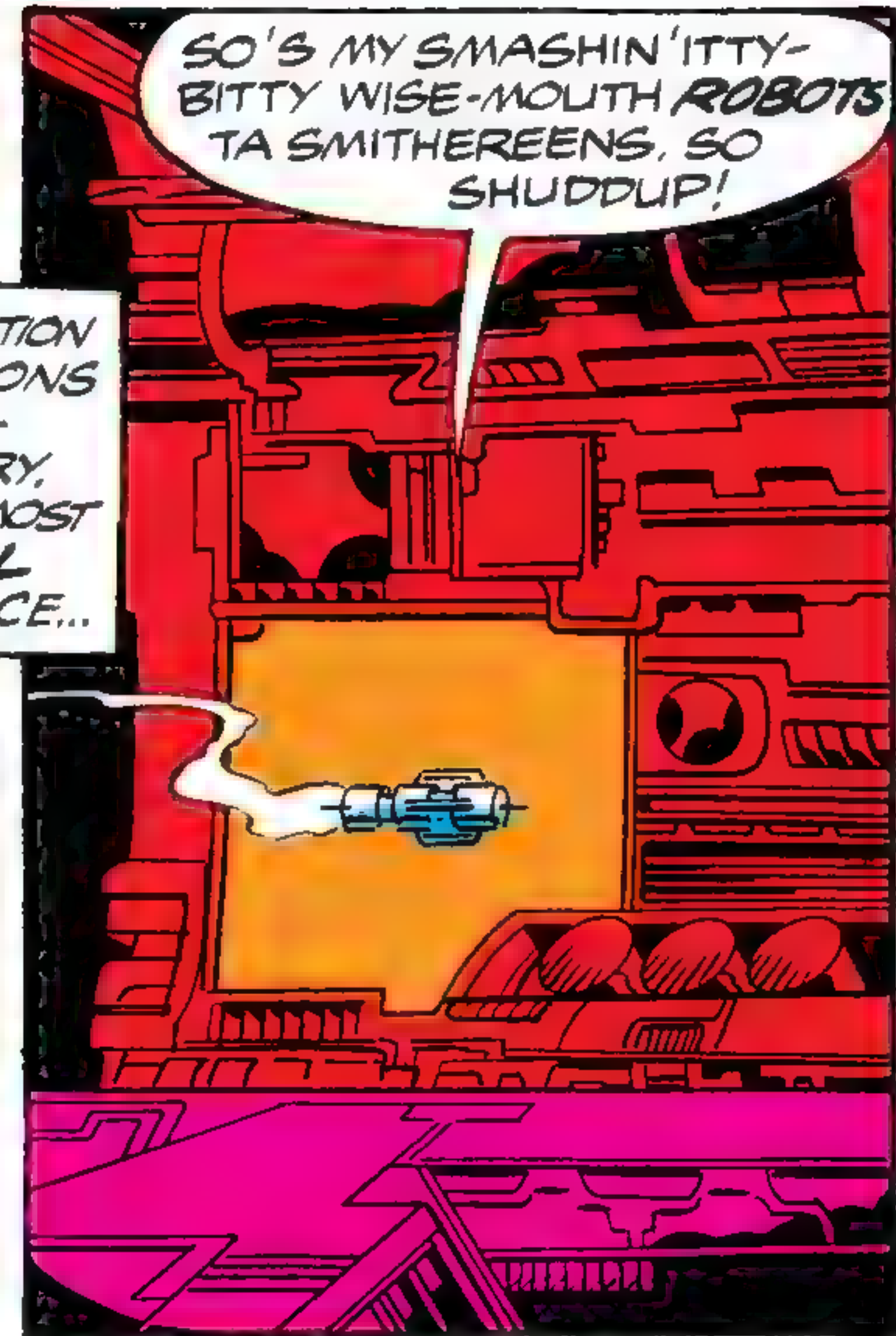
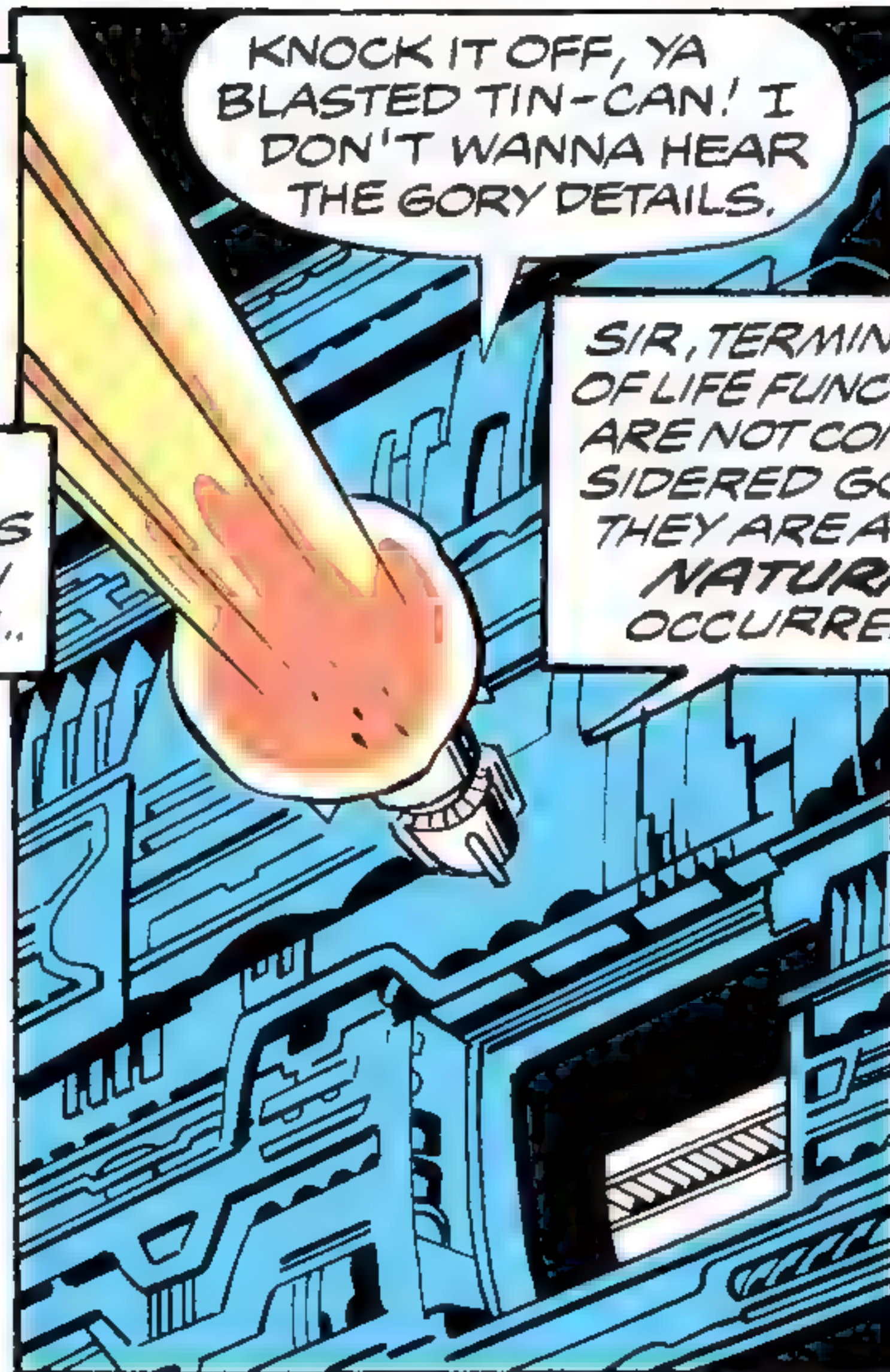
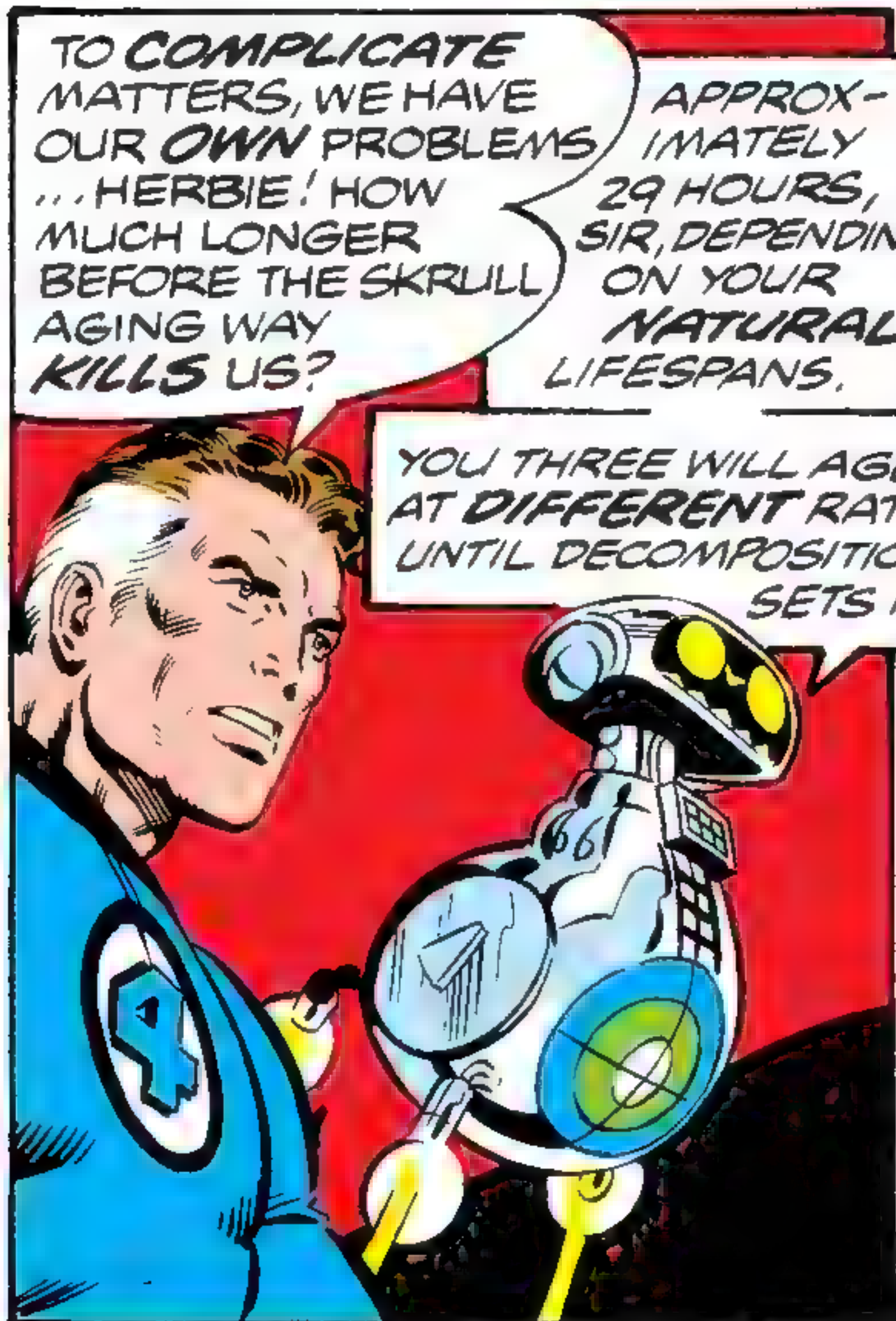
"ONCE THE SPHINX ABSORBED THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE **LIVING COMPUTERS** OF XANDAR, ONCE HE GAINED THE POWER THAT KNOWLEDGE GAVE HIM--

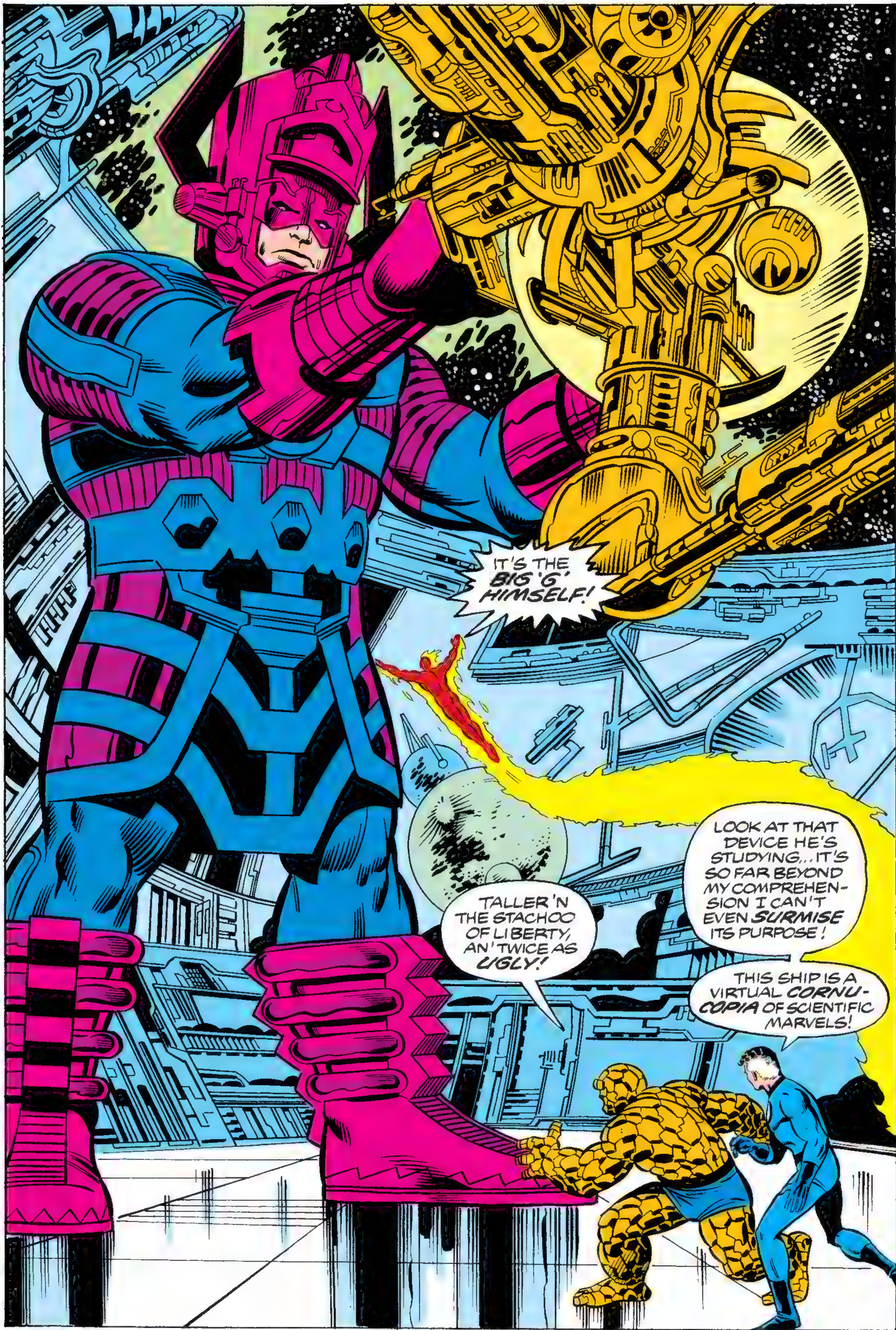
"--HE SEEMED TO BE DRIVEN **MAD**!!"

"THE SPHINX SOUGHT THE POWER AS A MEANS OF **ENDING** HIS IMMORTAL LIFE-- BUT ONCE THAT POWER WAS HIS--

"--ALL HE WANTED WAS TO **DESTROY** THE EARTH..."

"...AND WE WERE **HELPLESS** TO STOP HIM!"



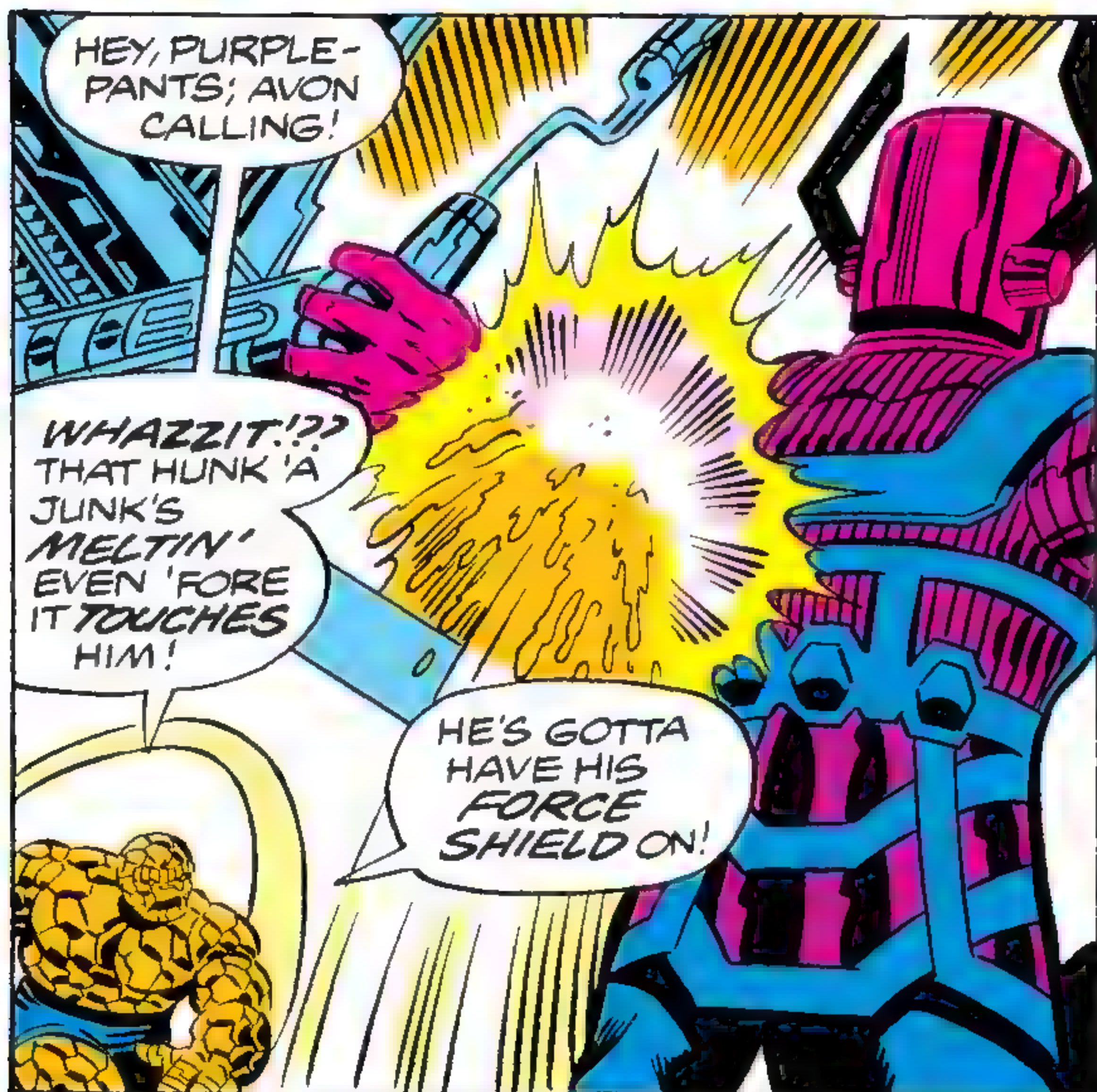
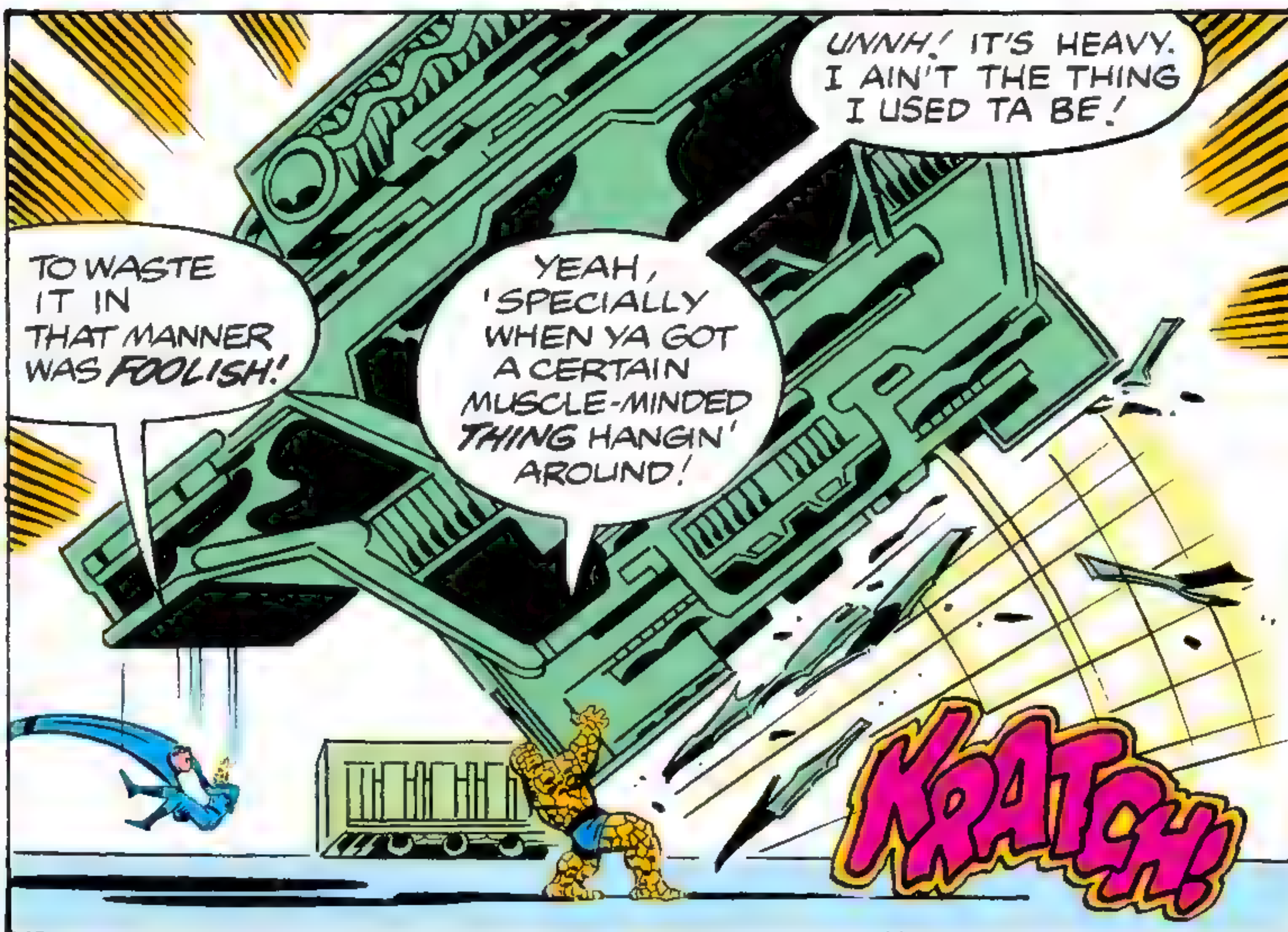
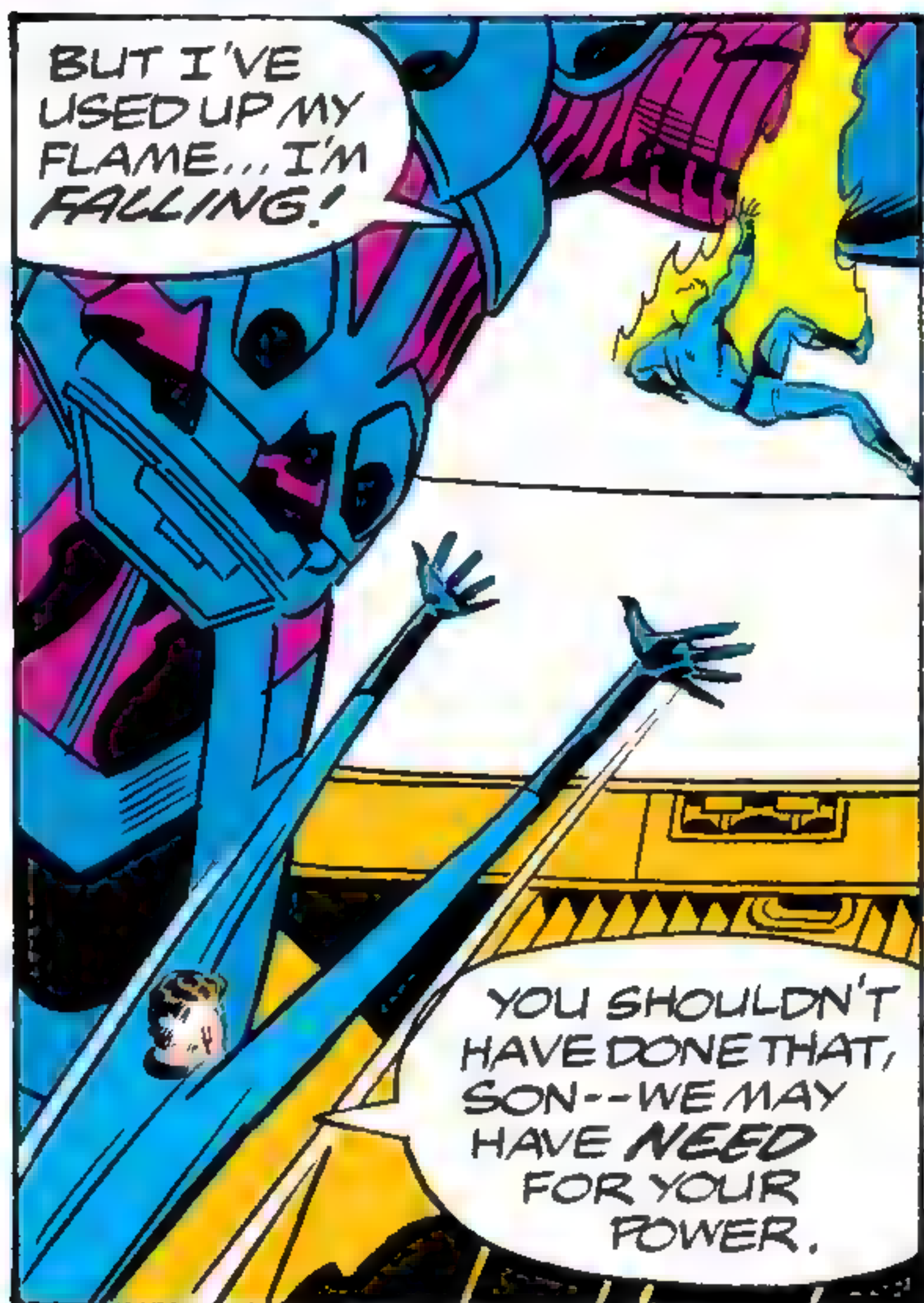
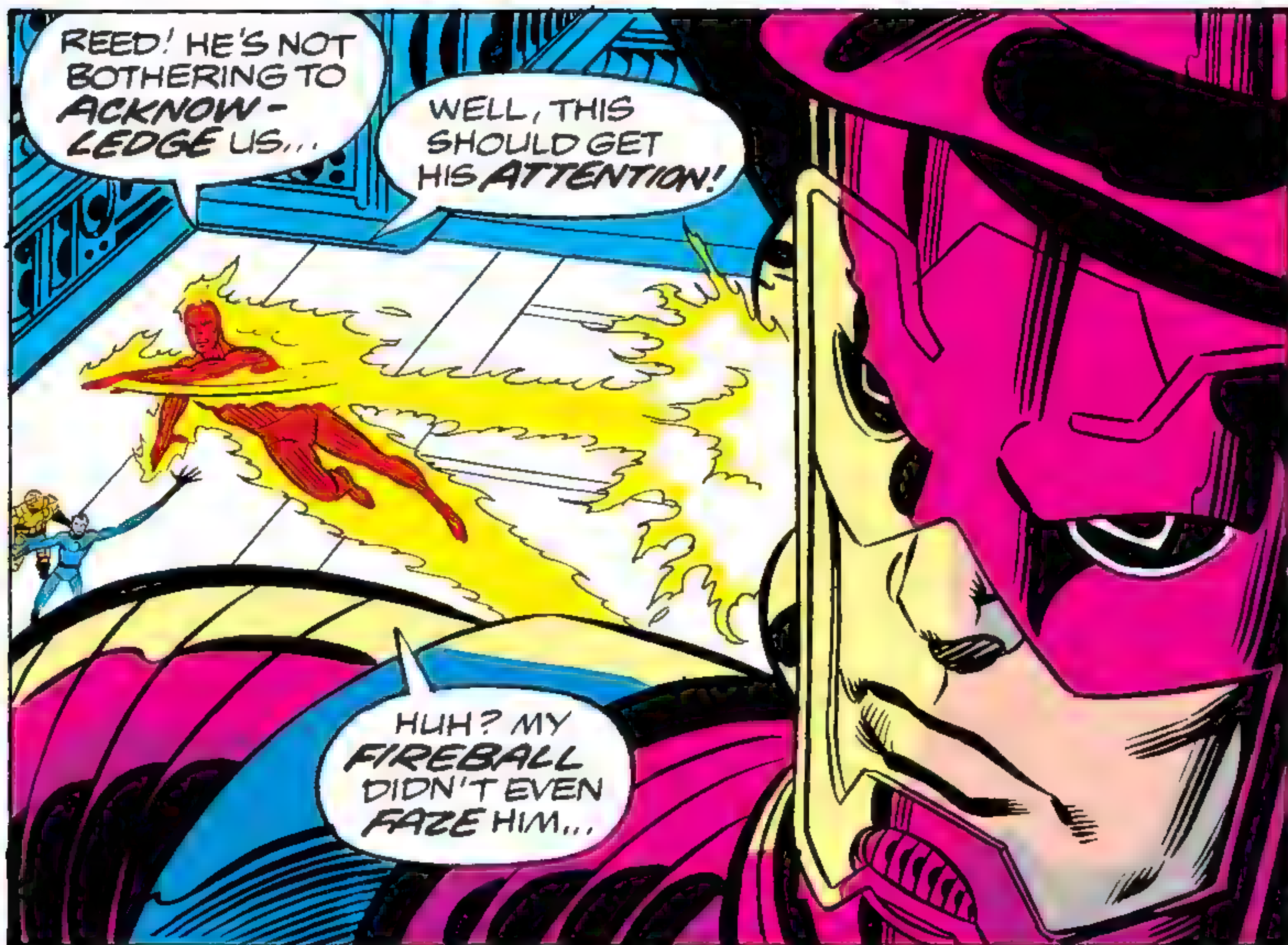


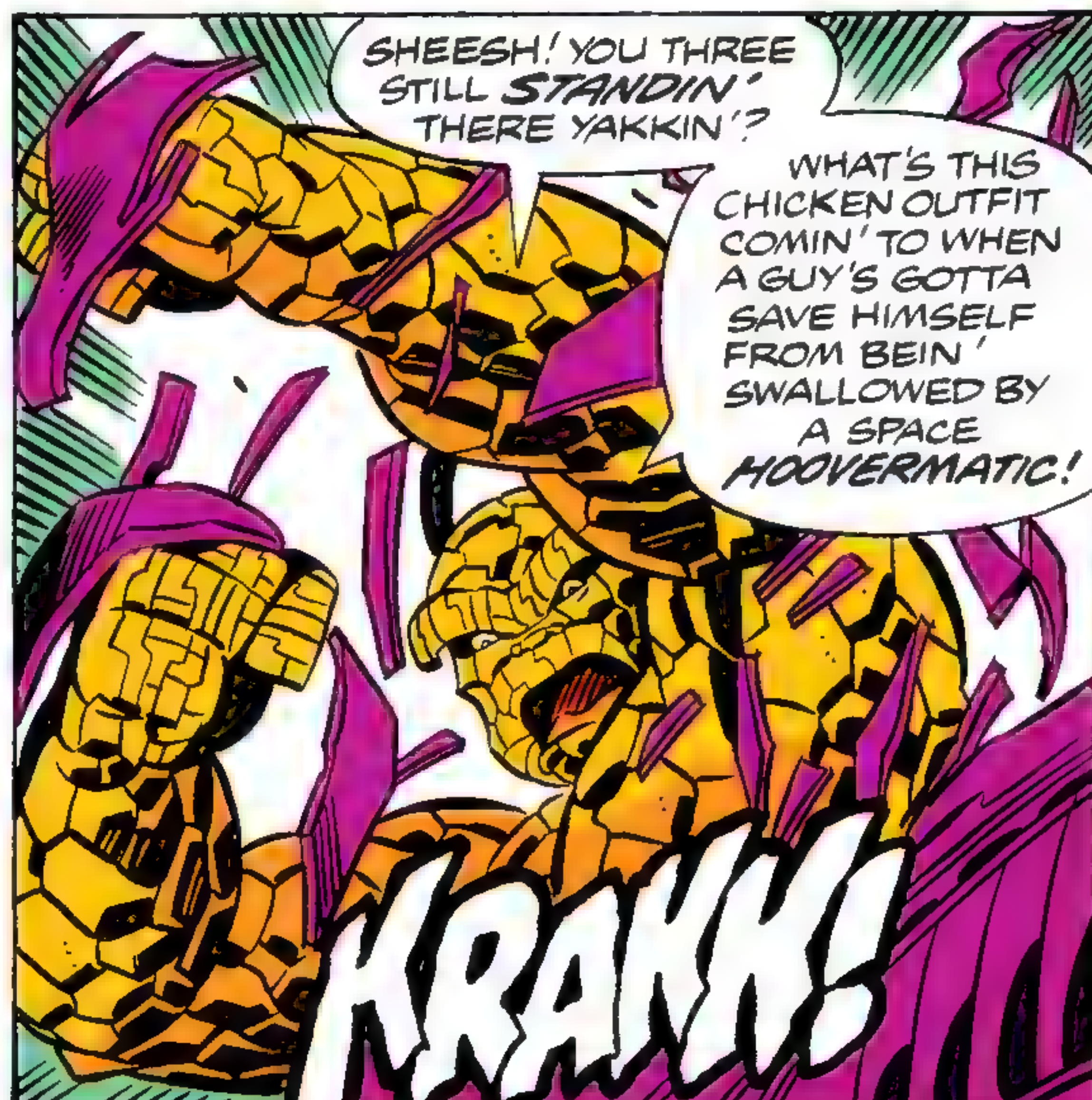
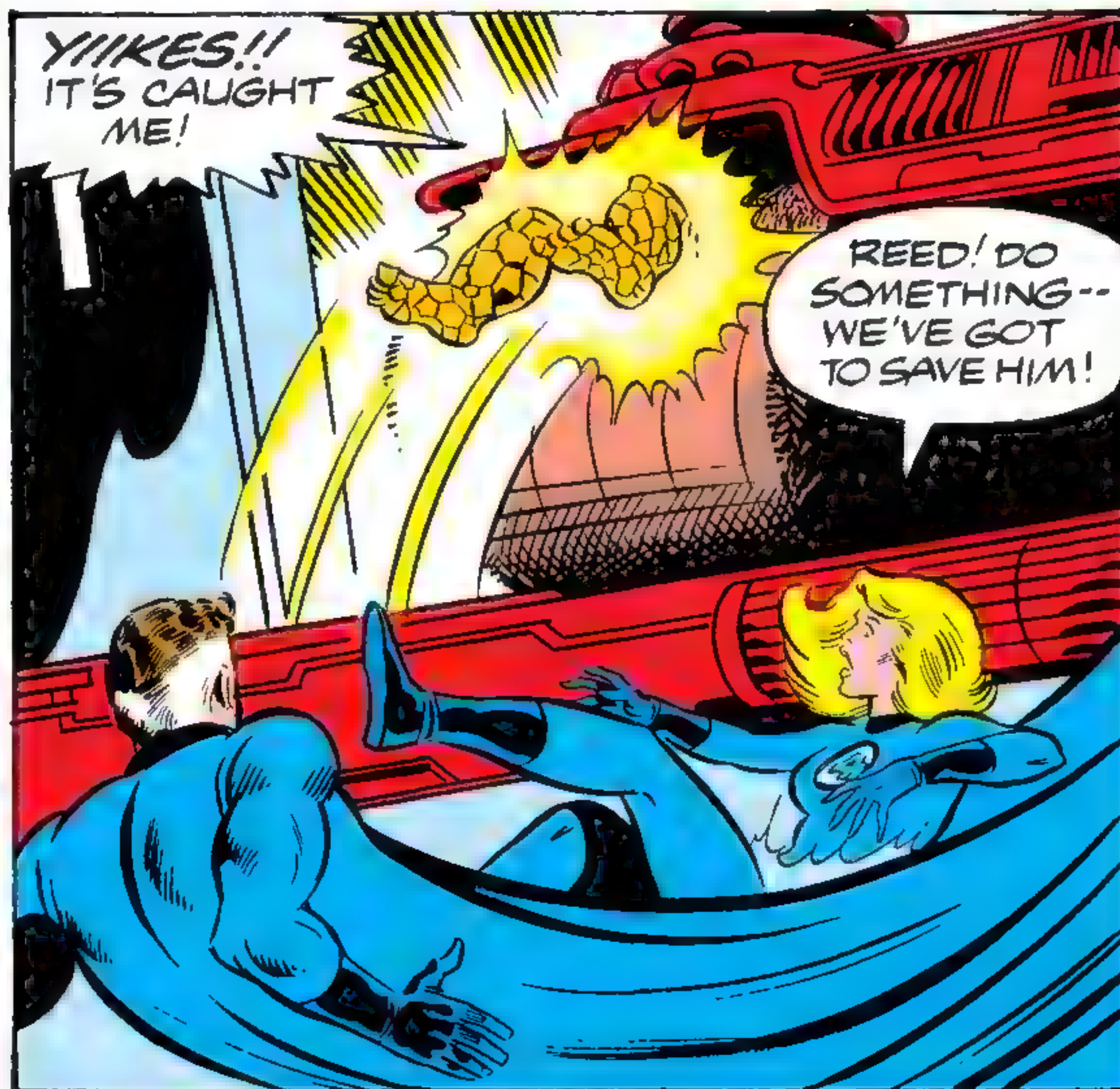
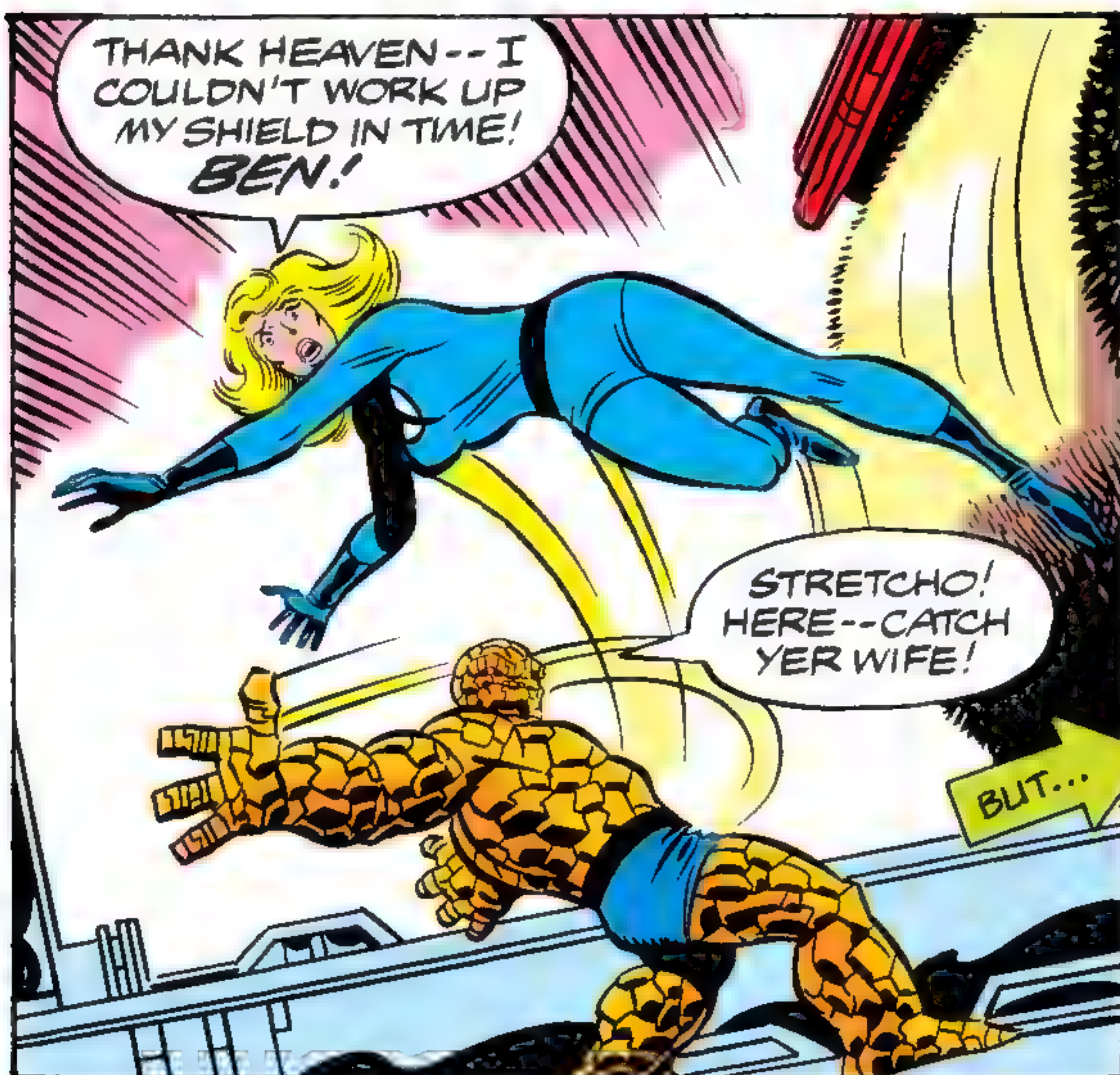
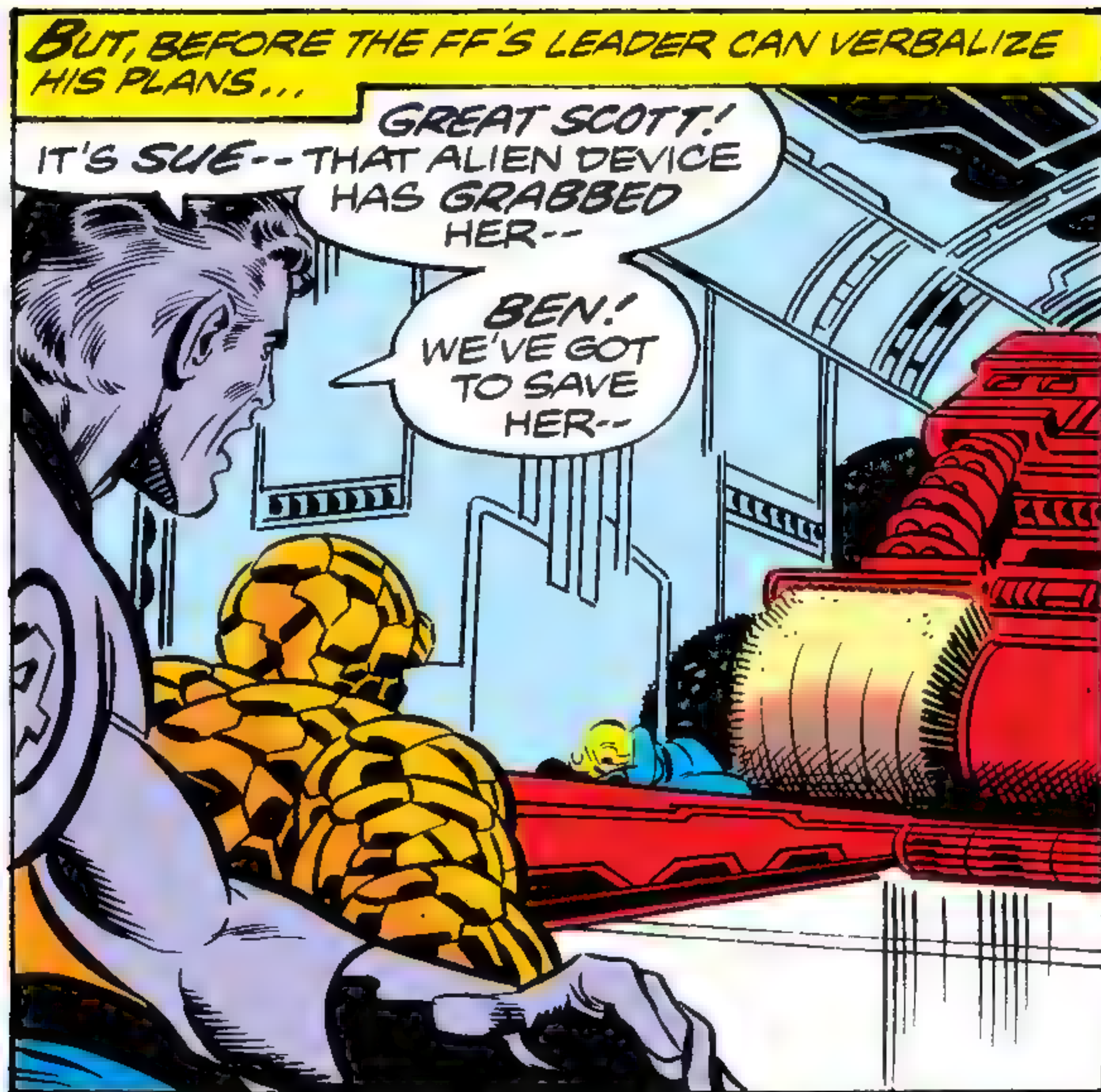
IT'S THE
BIG 'G'
HIMSELF!

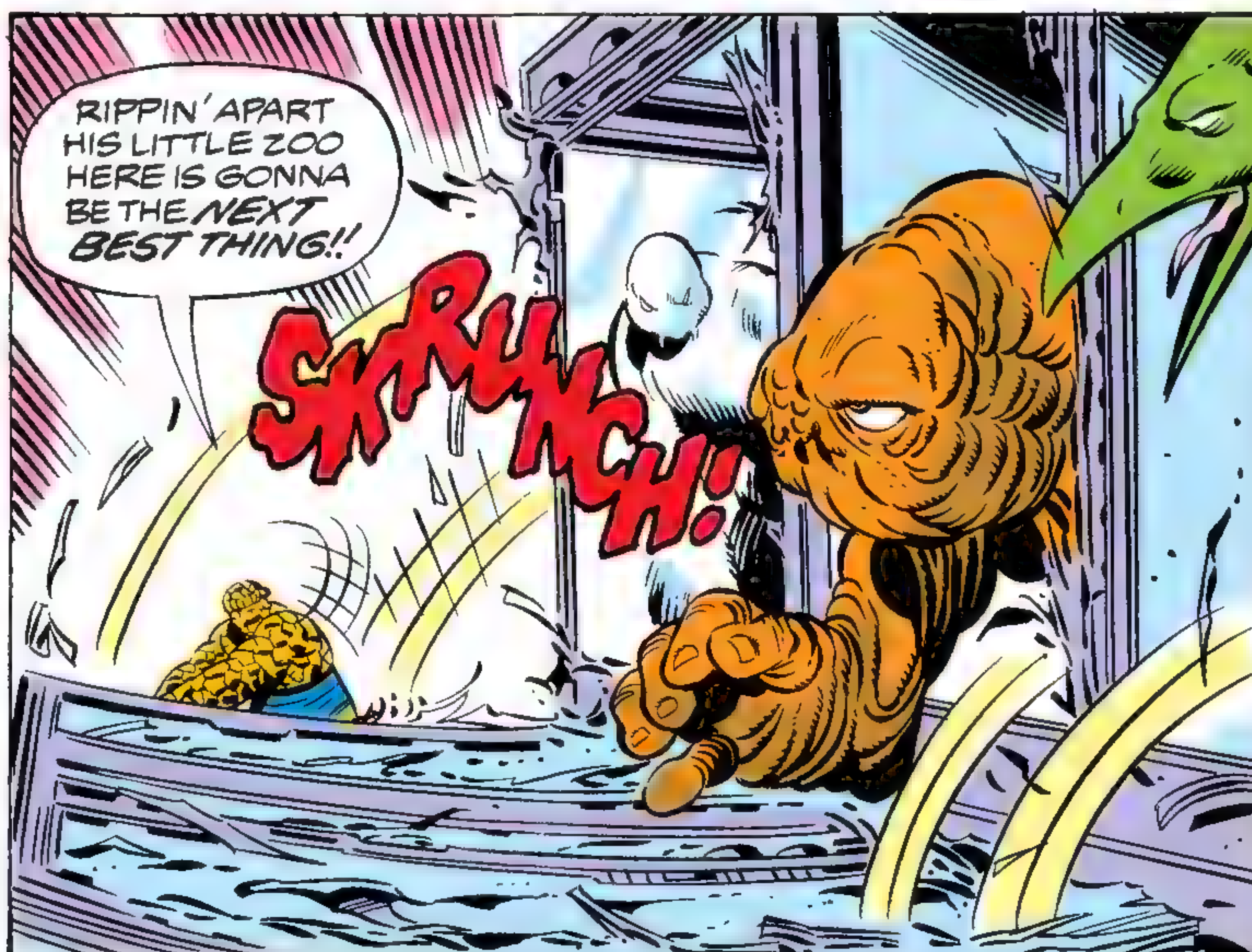
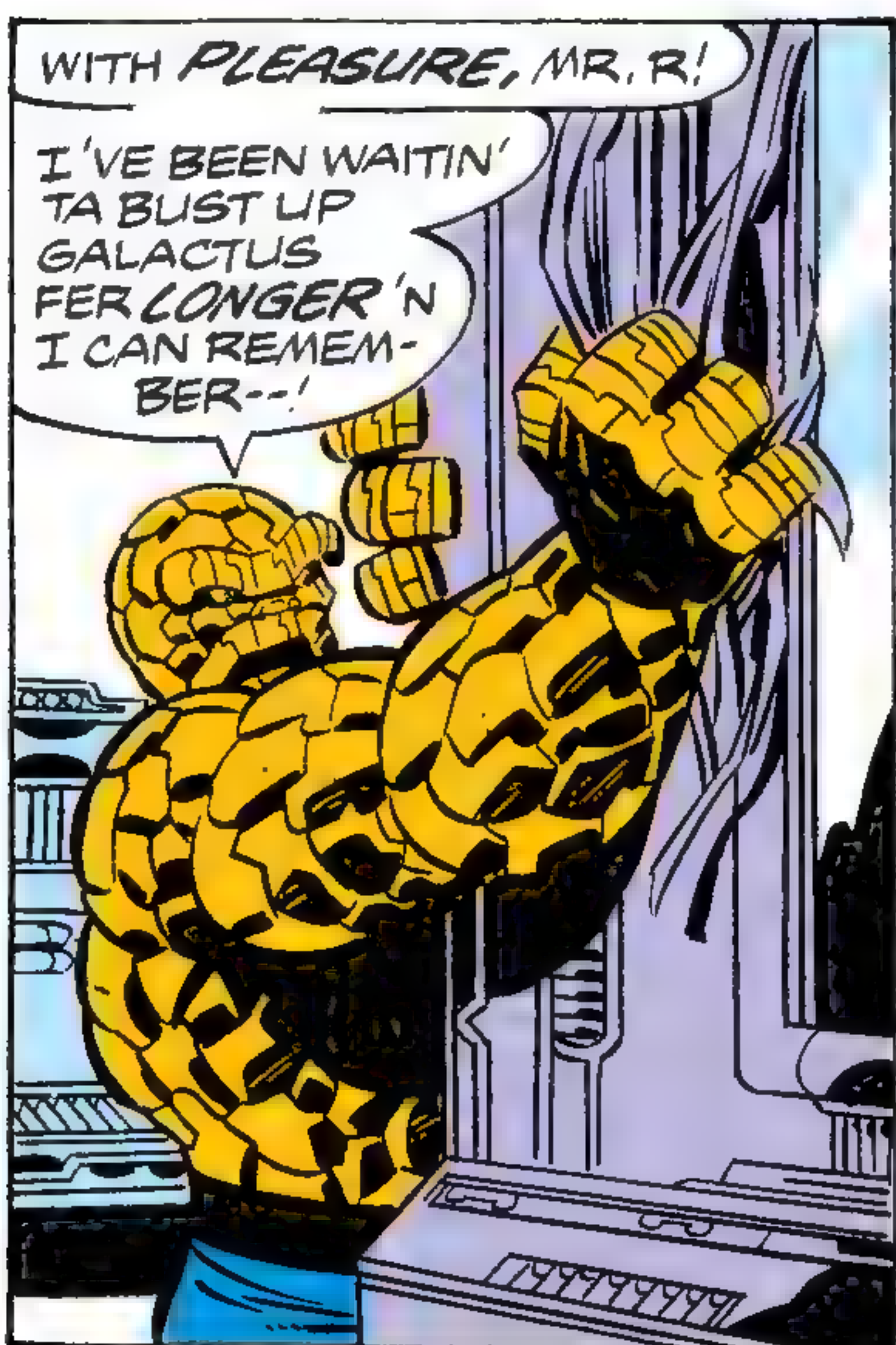
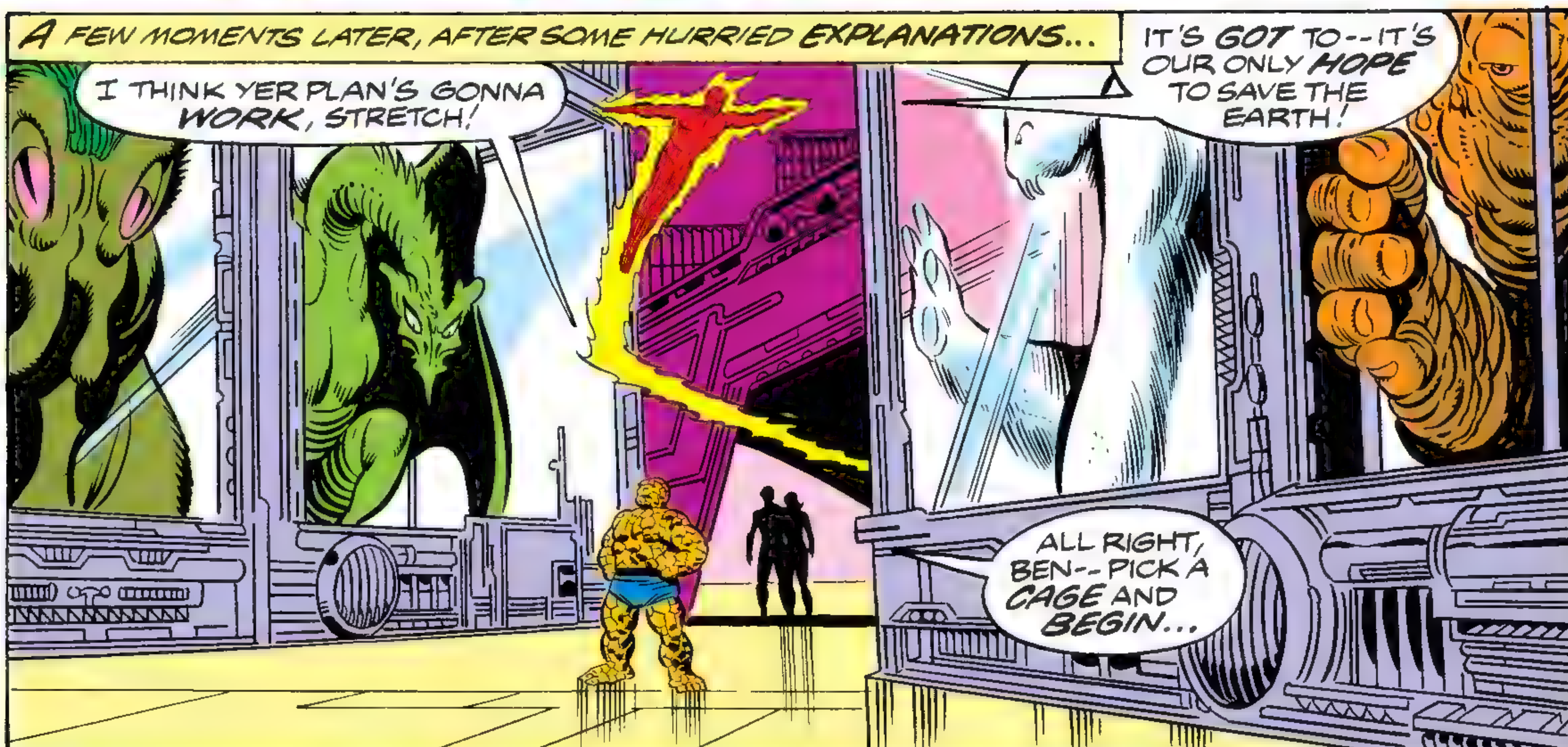
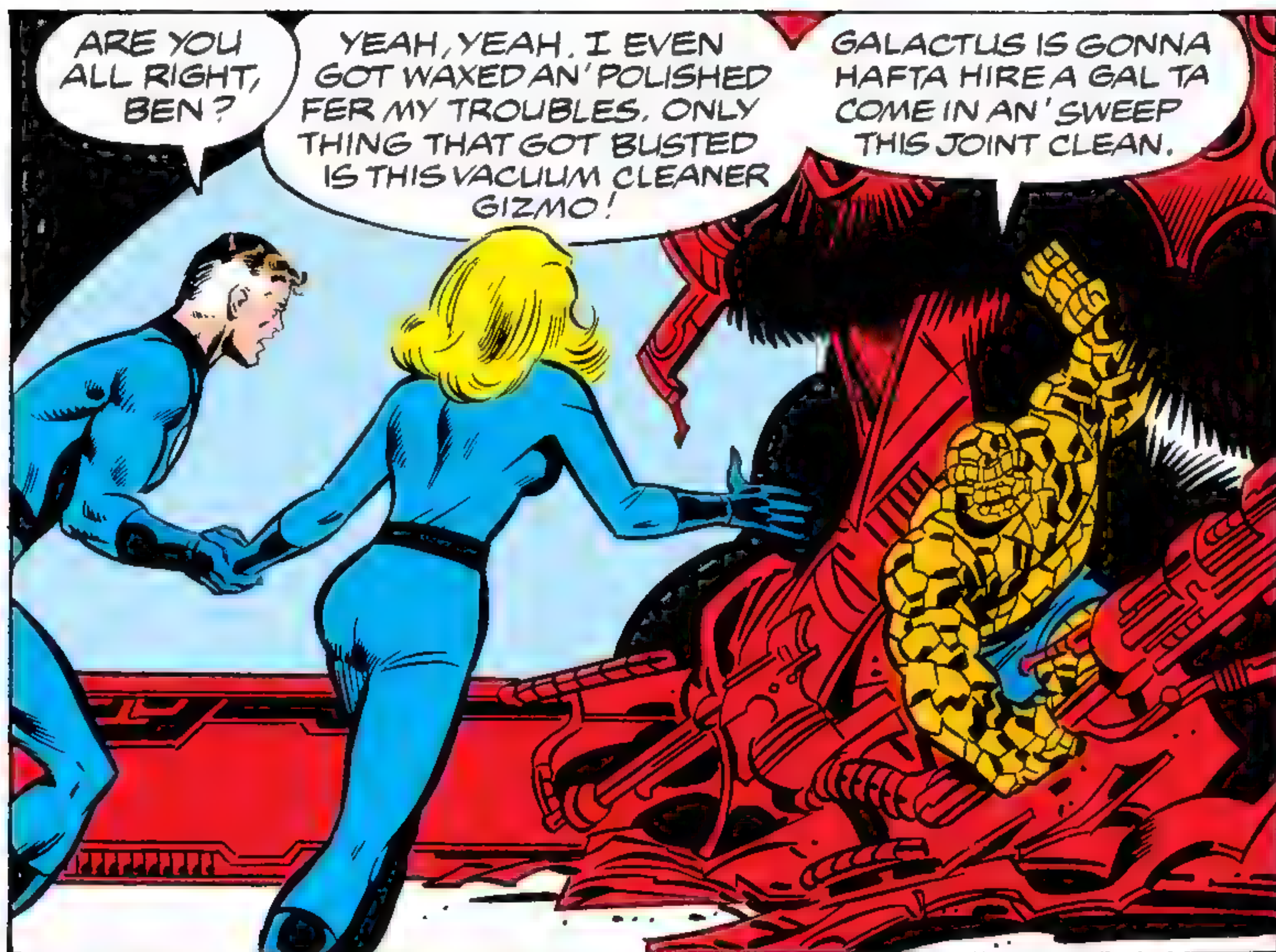
TALLER 'N
THE STACHOO
OF LIBERTY,
AN' TWICE AS
UGLY!

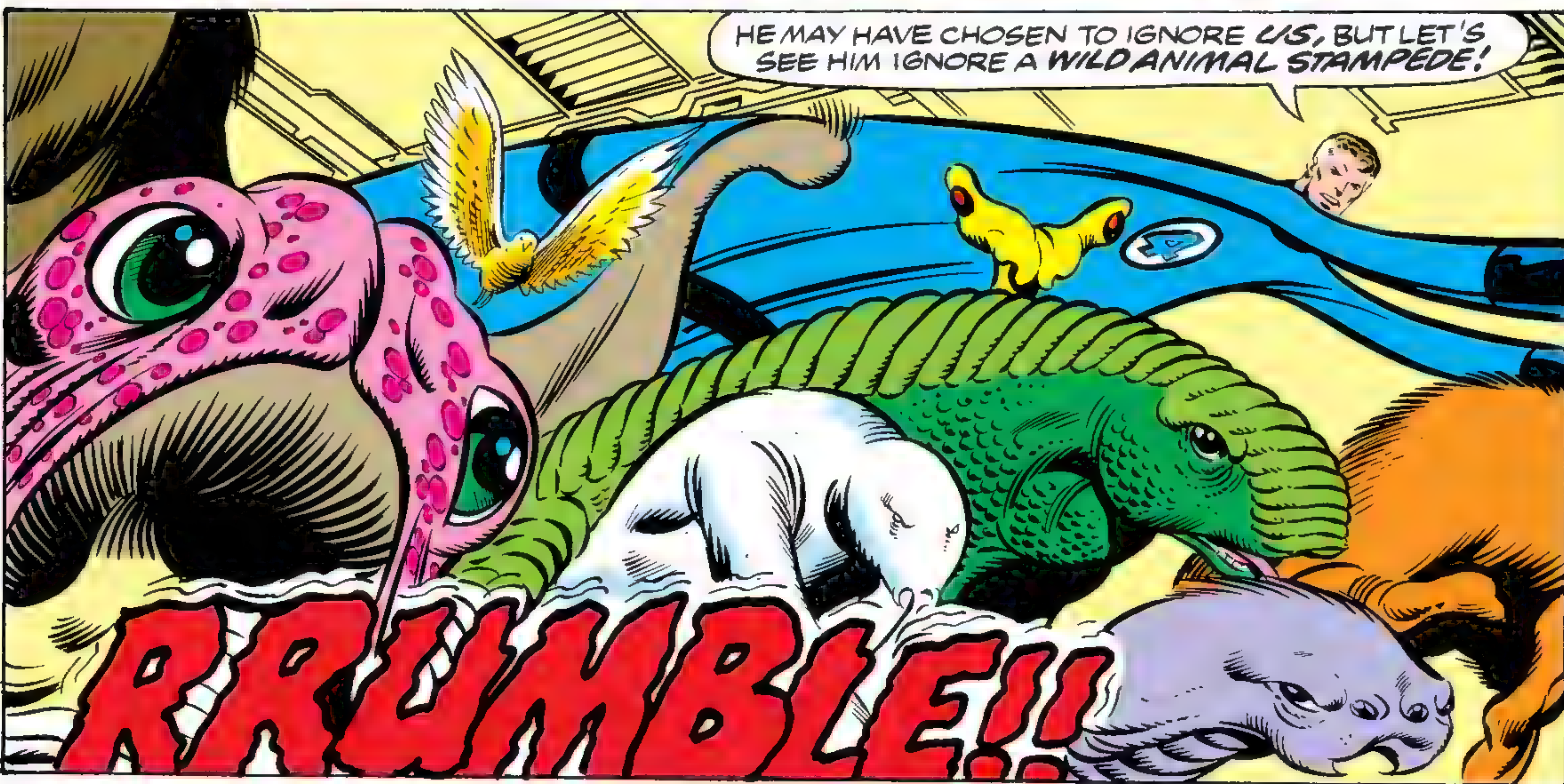
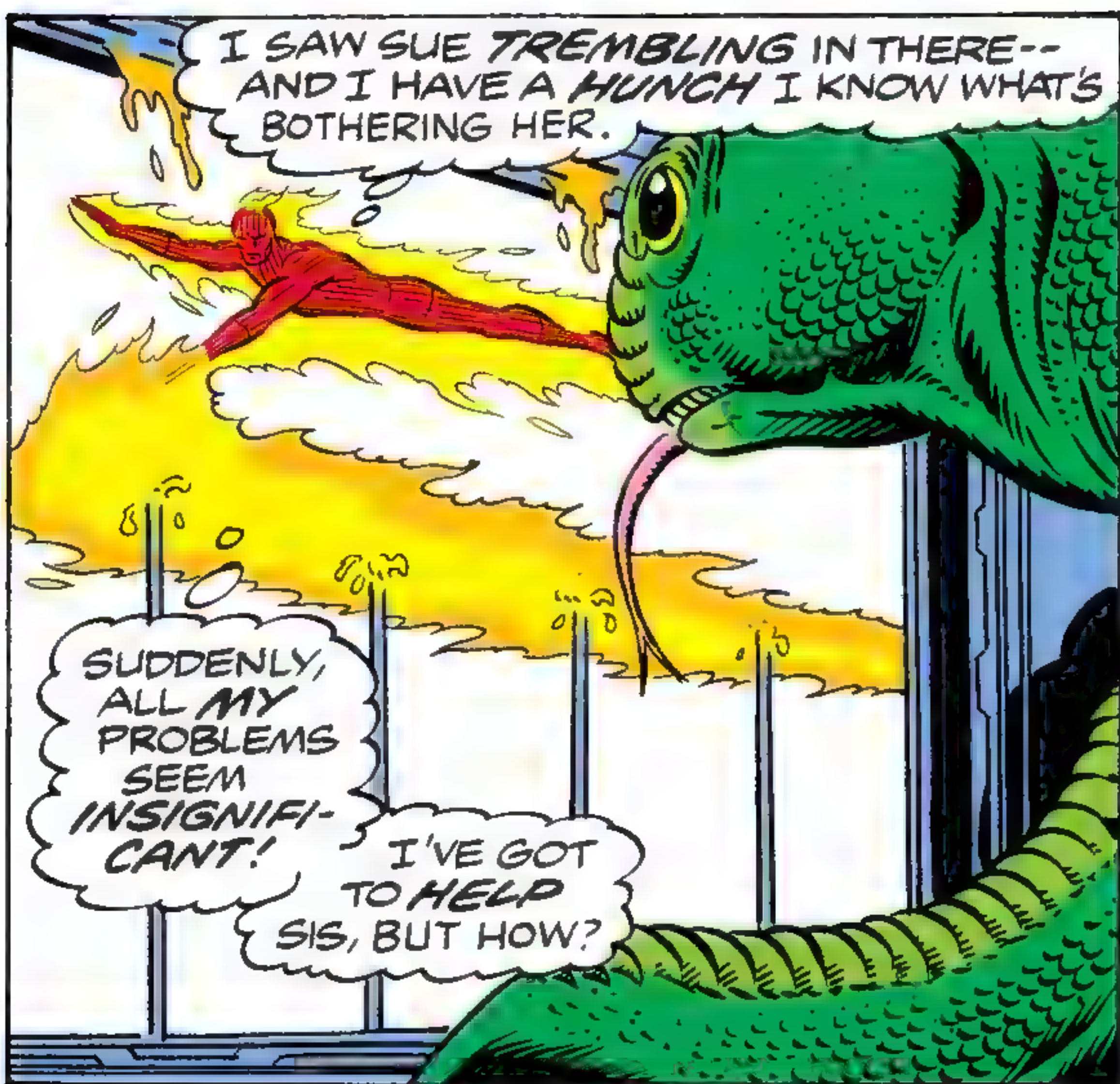
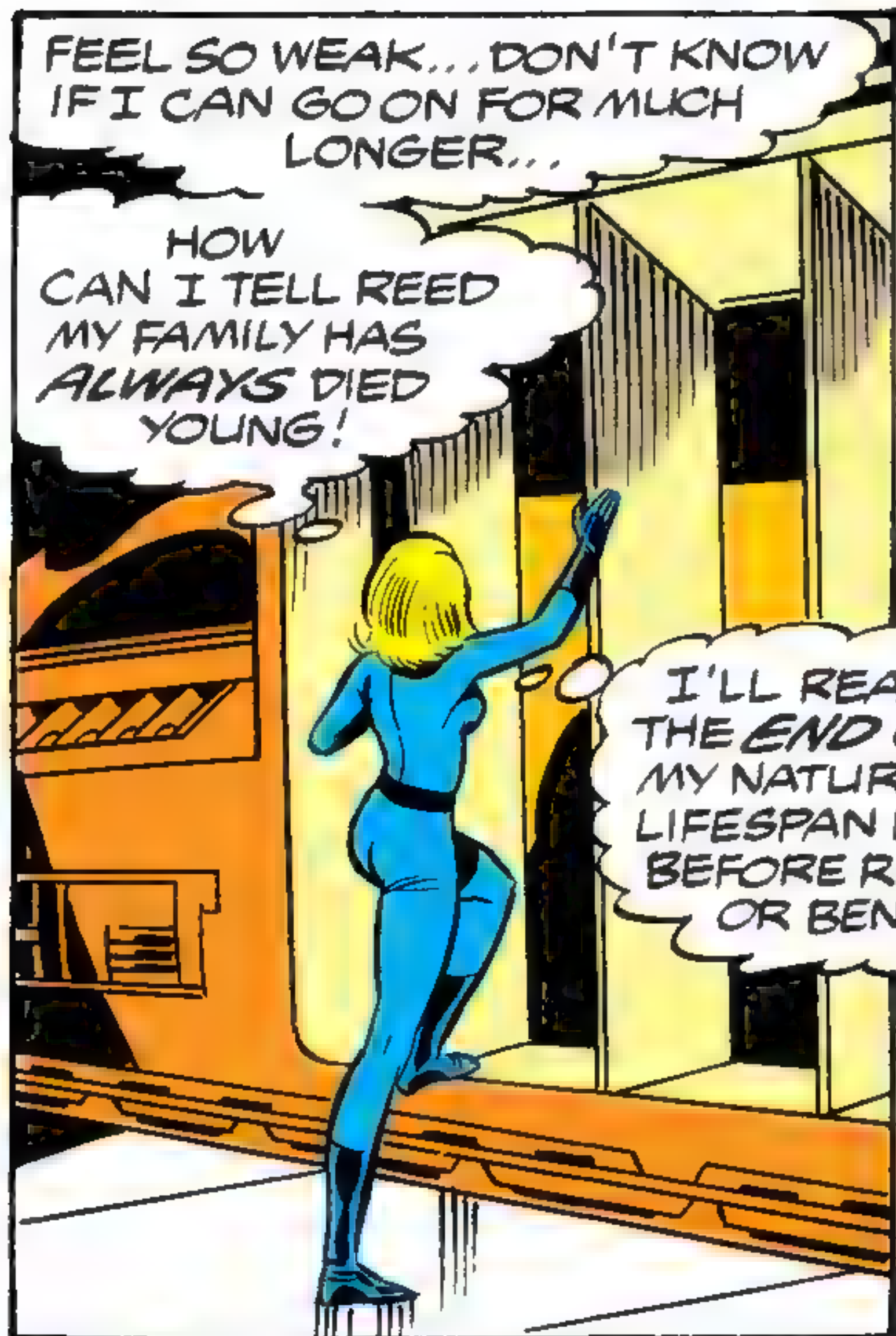
LOOK AT THAT
DEVICE HE'S
STUDYING... IT'S
SO FAR BEYOND
MY COMPREHENSION
I CAN'T
EVEN *SURMISE*
ITS PURPOSE!

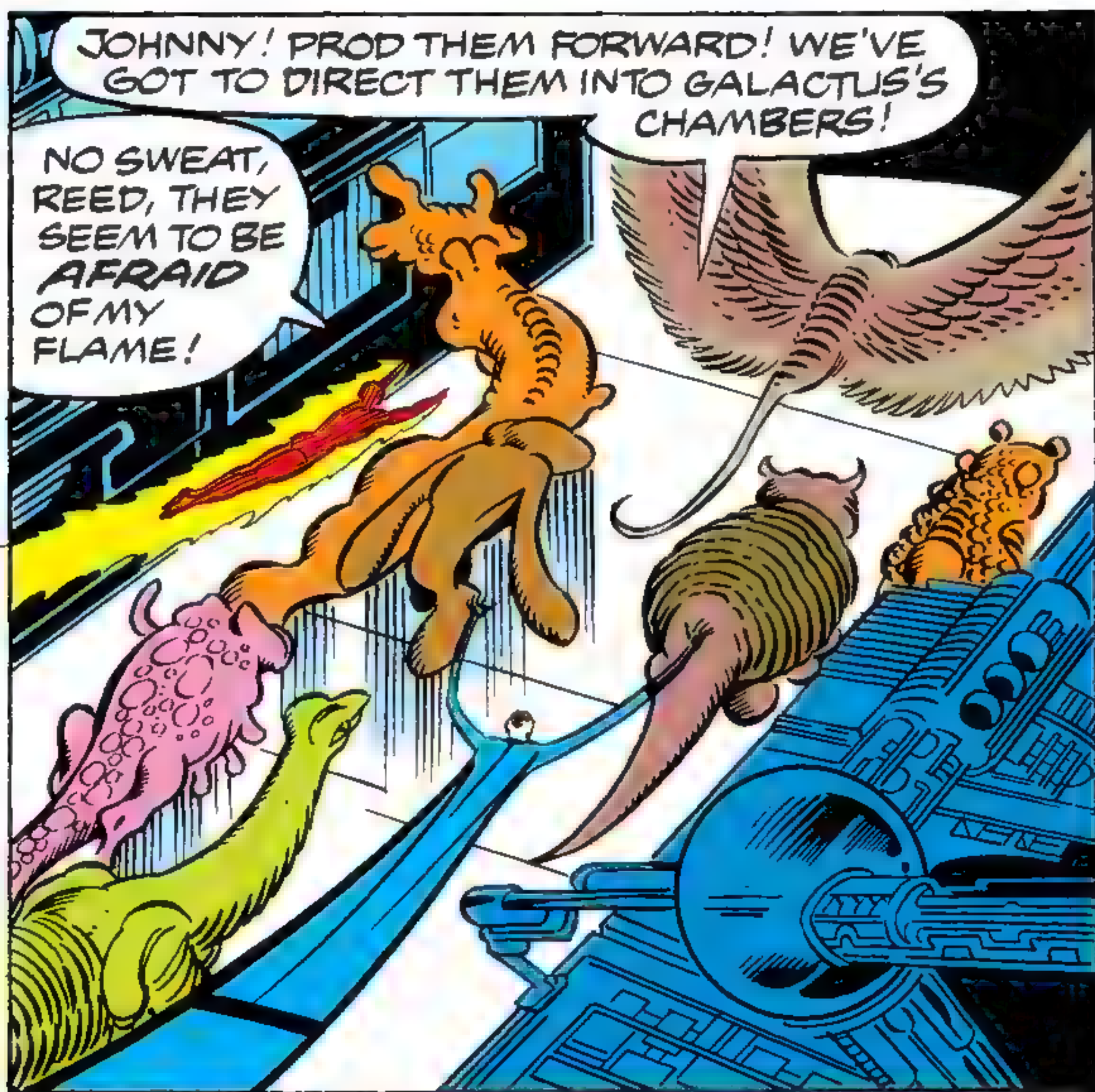
THIS SHIP IS A
VIRTUAL *CORNU-
COPIA* OF SCIENTIFIC
MARVELS!





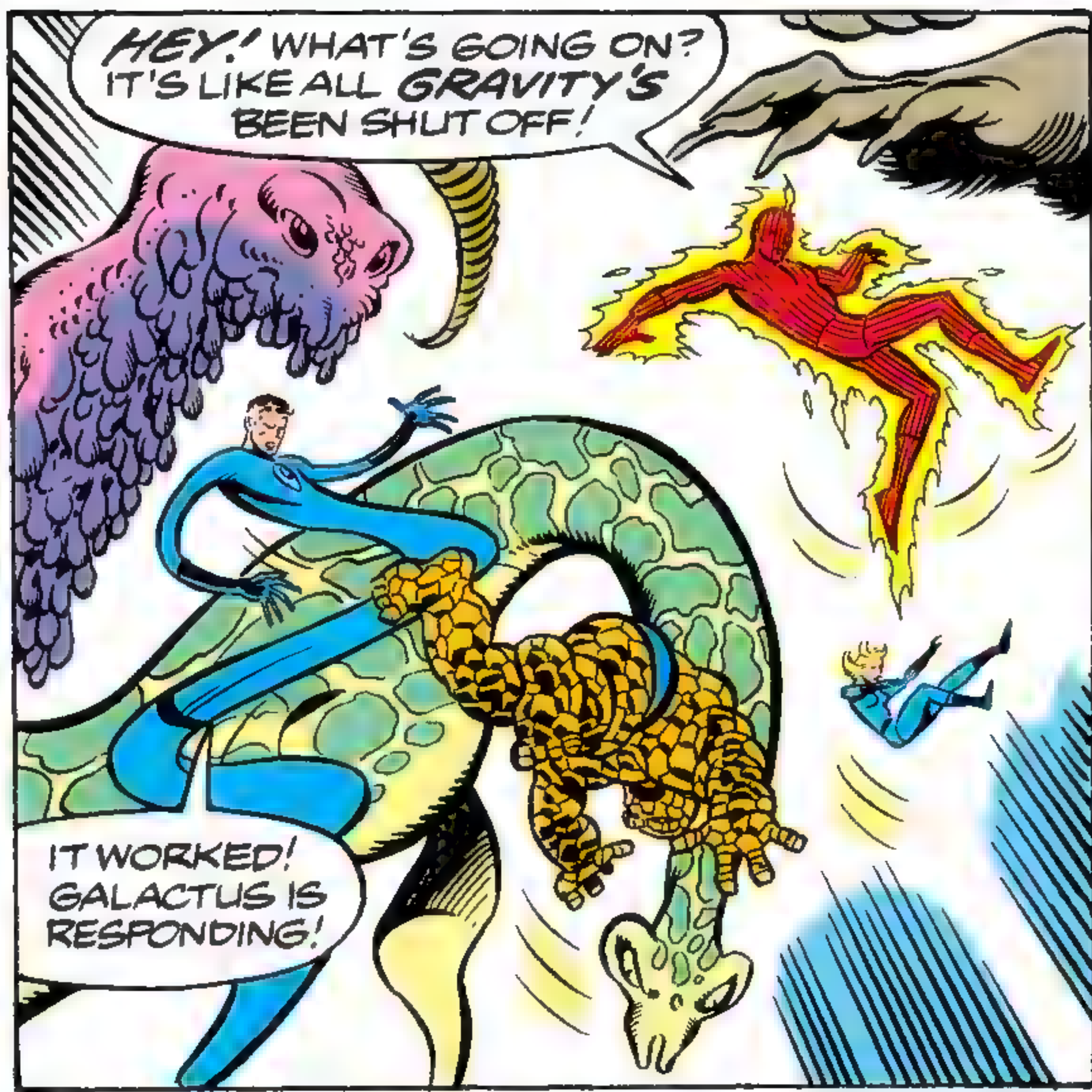






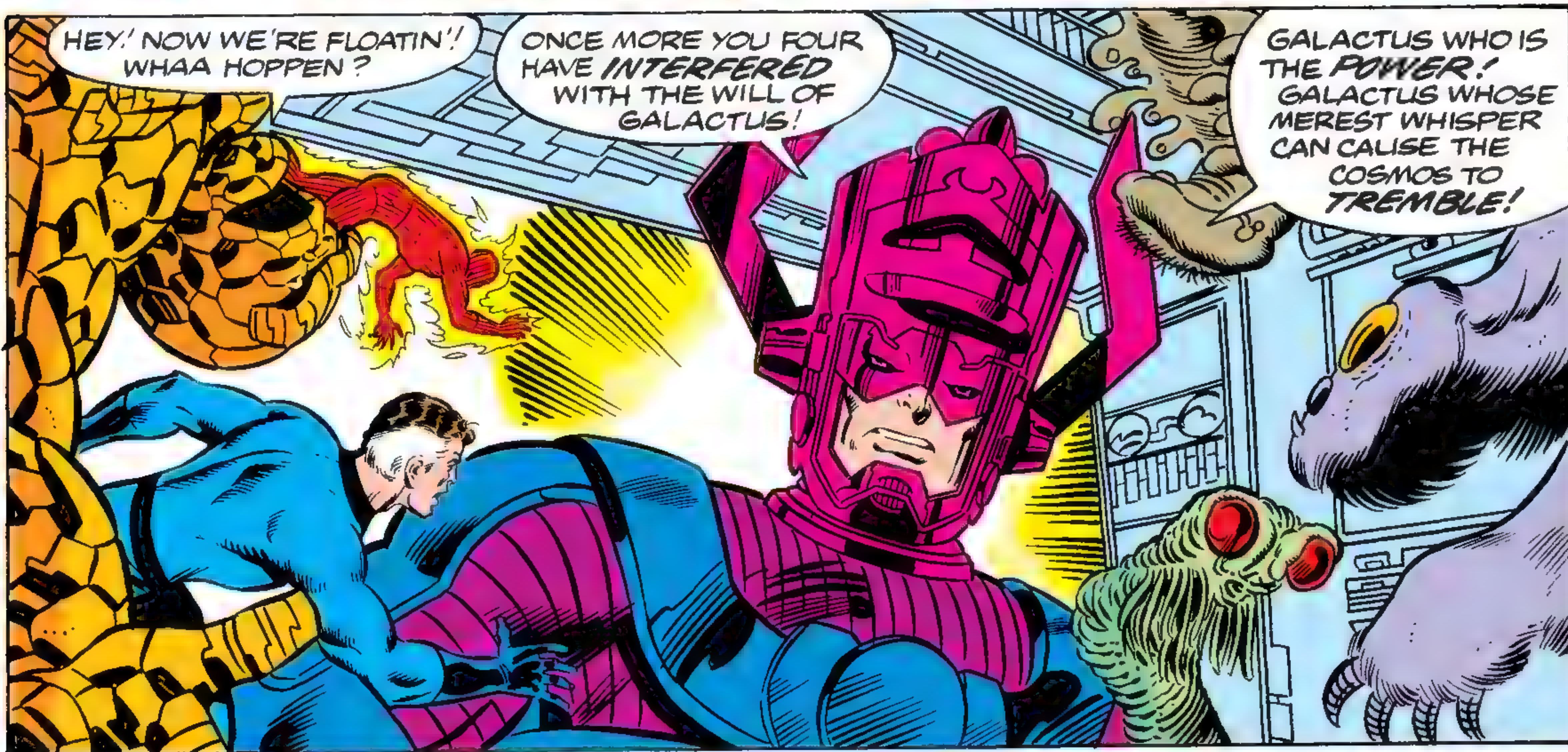
JOHNNY! PROD THEM FORWARD! WE'VE GOT TO DIRECT THEM INTO GALACTUS'S CHAMBERS!

NO SWEAT, REED, THEY SEEM TO BE AFRAID OF MY FLAME!



HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON? IT'S LIKE ALL GRAVITY'S BEEN SHUT OFF!

IT WORKED! GALACTUS IS RESPONDING!



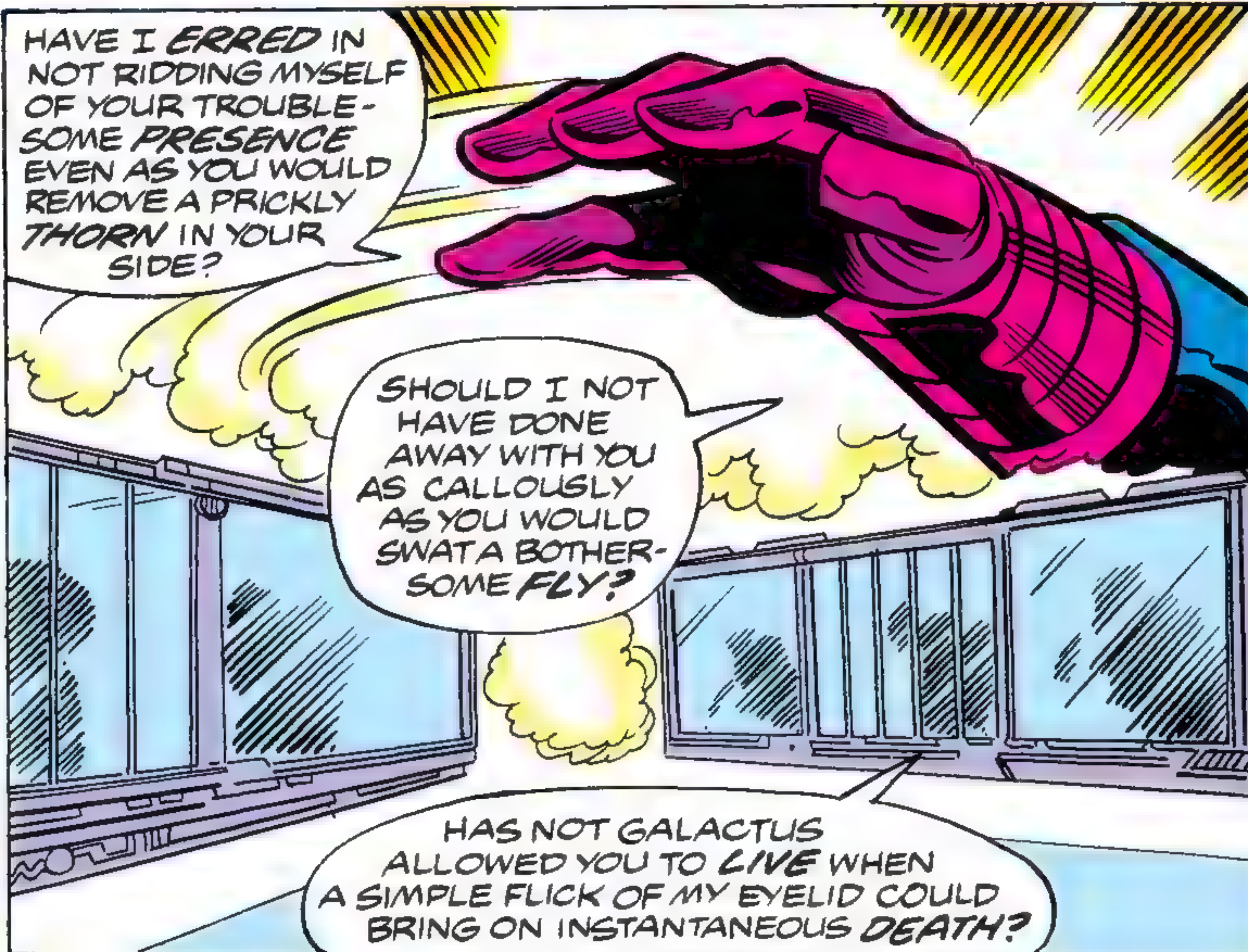
HEY! NOW WE'RE FLOATIN'! WHAA HOPPEN?

ONCE MORE YOU FOUR HAVE INTERFERED WITH THE WILL OF GALACTUS!

GALACTUS WHO IS THE POWER! GALACTUS WHOSE MEREST WHISPER CAN CALISE THE COSMOS TO TREMBLE!



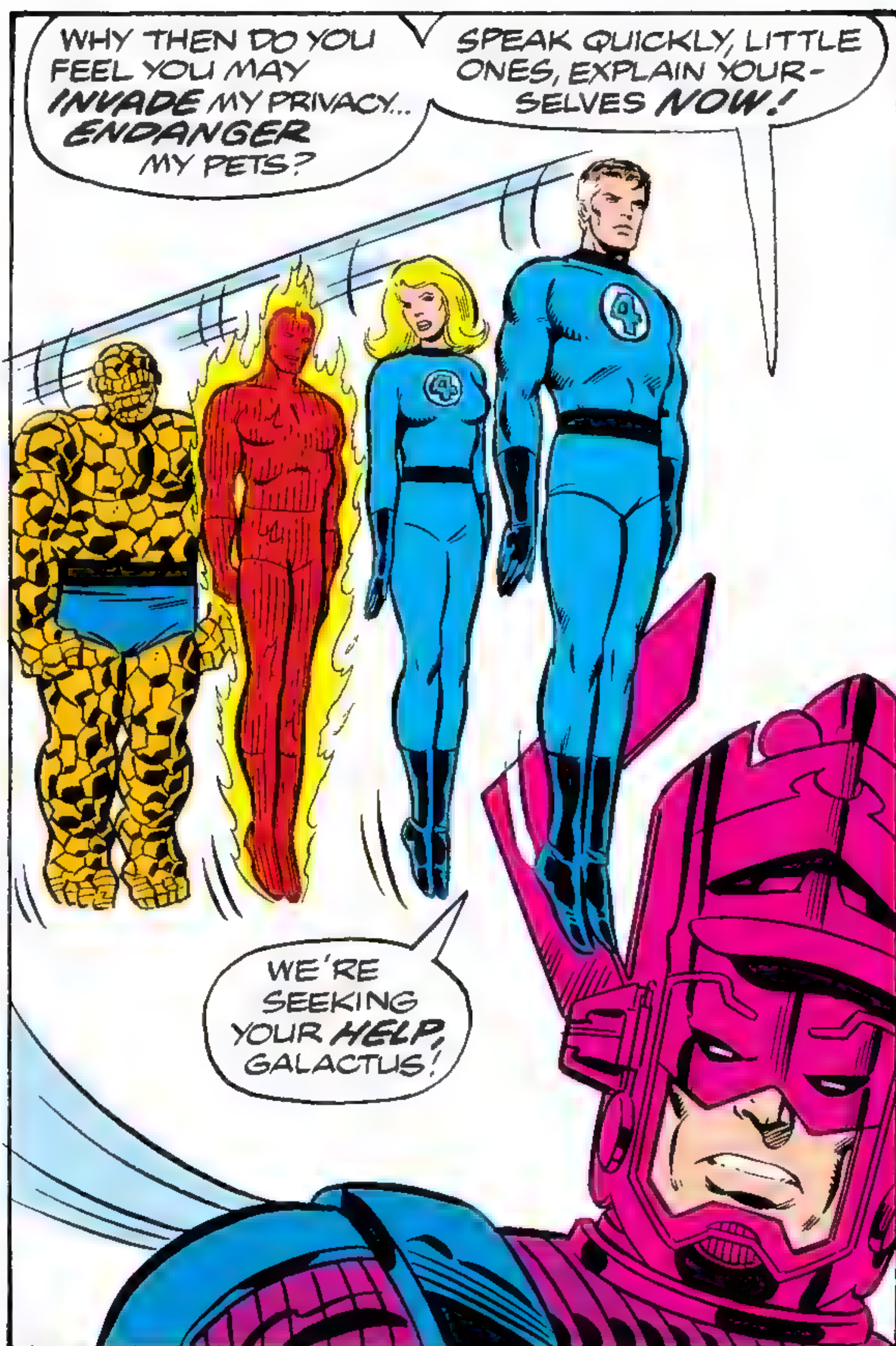
YOU ARE LESS THEN A MOTE IN MINE EYE-- AND YET, YOU FEEL FREE TO INVADIE MY PRIVATE SANCTORUM?! HOW DARE YOU!!!



HAVE I ERRED IN NOT RIDDING MYSELF OF YOUR TROUBLE-- SOME PRESENCE EVEN AS YOU WOULD REMOVE A PRICKLY THORN IN YOUR SIDE?

SHOULD I NOT HAVE DONE AWAY WITH YOU AS CALLOUSLY AS YOU WOULD SWATA BOTHER-SOME FLY?

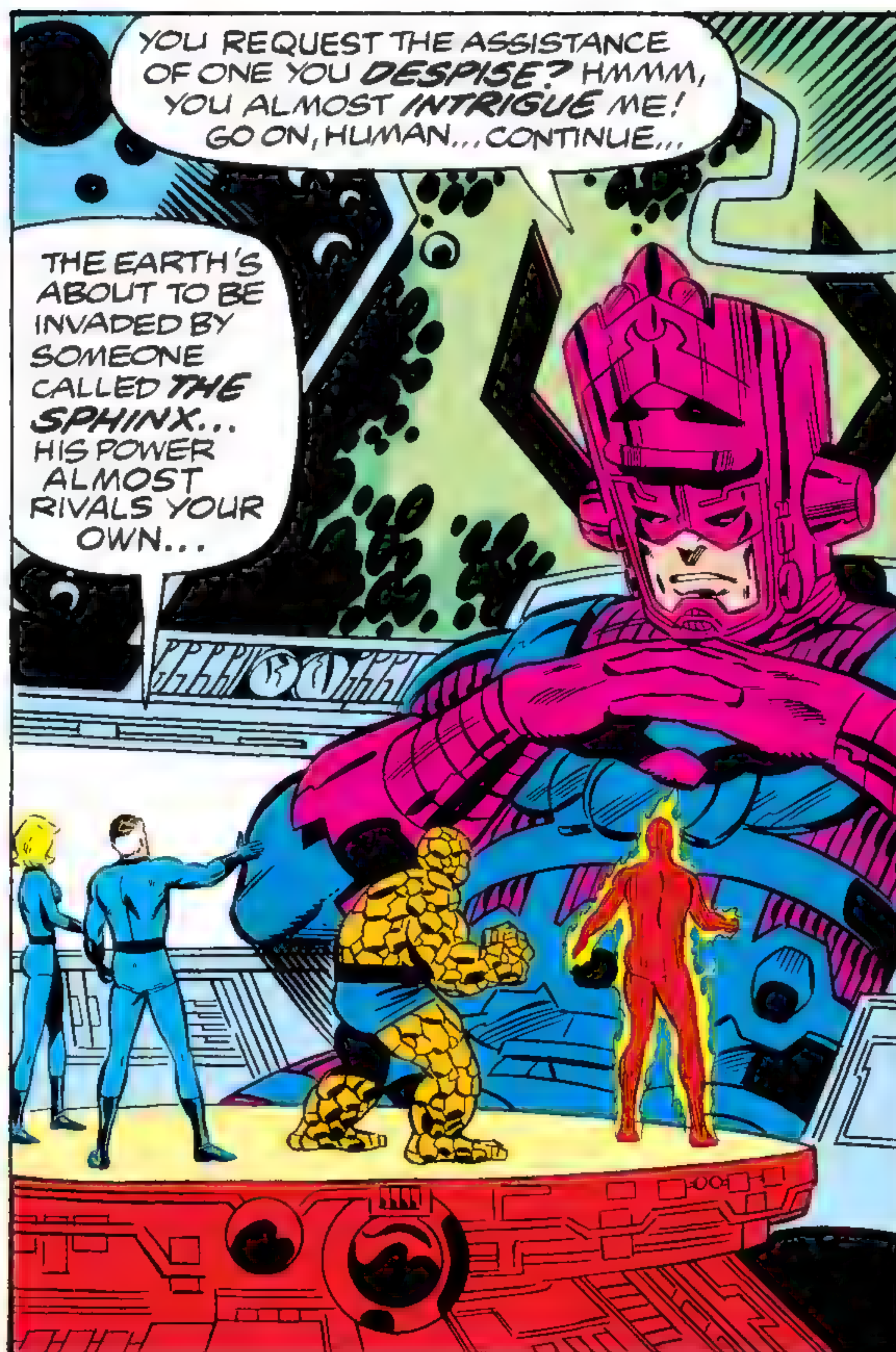
HAS NOT GALACTUS ALLOWED YOU TO LIVE WHEN A SIMPLE FLICK OF MY EYELID COULD BRING ON INSTANTANEOUS DEATH?



WHY THEN DO YOU
FEEL YOU MAY
INVADE MY PRIVACY...
ENDANGER
MY PETS?

SPEAK QUICKLY, LITTLE
ONES, EXPLAIN YOUR-
SELVES **NOW!**

WE'RE
SEEKING
YOUR **HELP**,
GALACTUS!



YOU REQUEST THE ASSISTANCE
OF ONE YOU **DESPISE**? HMMM,
YOU ALMOST **INTRIGUE** ME!
GO ON, HUMAN... CONTINUE...

THE EARTH'S
ABOUT TO BE
INVADED BY
SOMEONE
CALLED **THE**
SPHINX...
HIS POWER
ALMOST
RIVALS YOUR
OWN...



IF WE'RE TO
SURVIVE,
WE NEED
YOU TO--

ENOUGH! I AM
AWARE OF THE
EVENTS TRAN-
SPIRING ON EARTH.
INDEED, AM I NOT
GALACTUS, TO
WHOM ALL IS
KNOWLEDGE?

LONG HAVE I
ADMIRERD YOUR
RACE FOR ITS
TENACITY!
YET, YOUR
PLANET NO
LONGER HOLDS
MY INTEREST.



THE SPHINX MAY **REND**
YOUR WORLD FROM END-
TO-END FOR ALL I
CARE.

THUS, FOR NOW,
FOR ALWAYS,
MY ANSWER TO
YOU IS--**NO!**

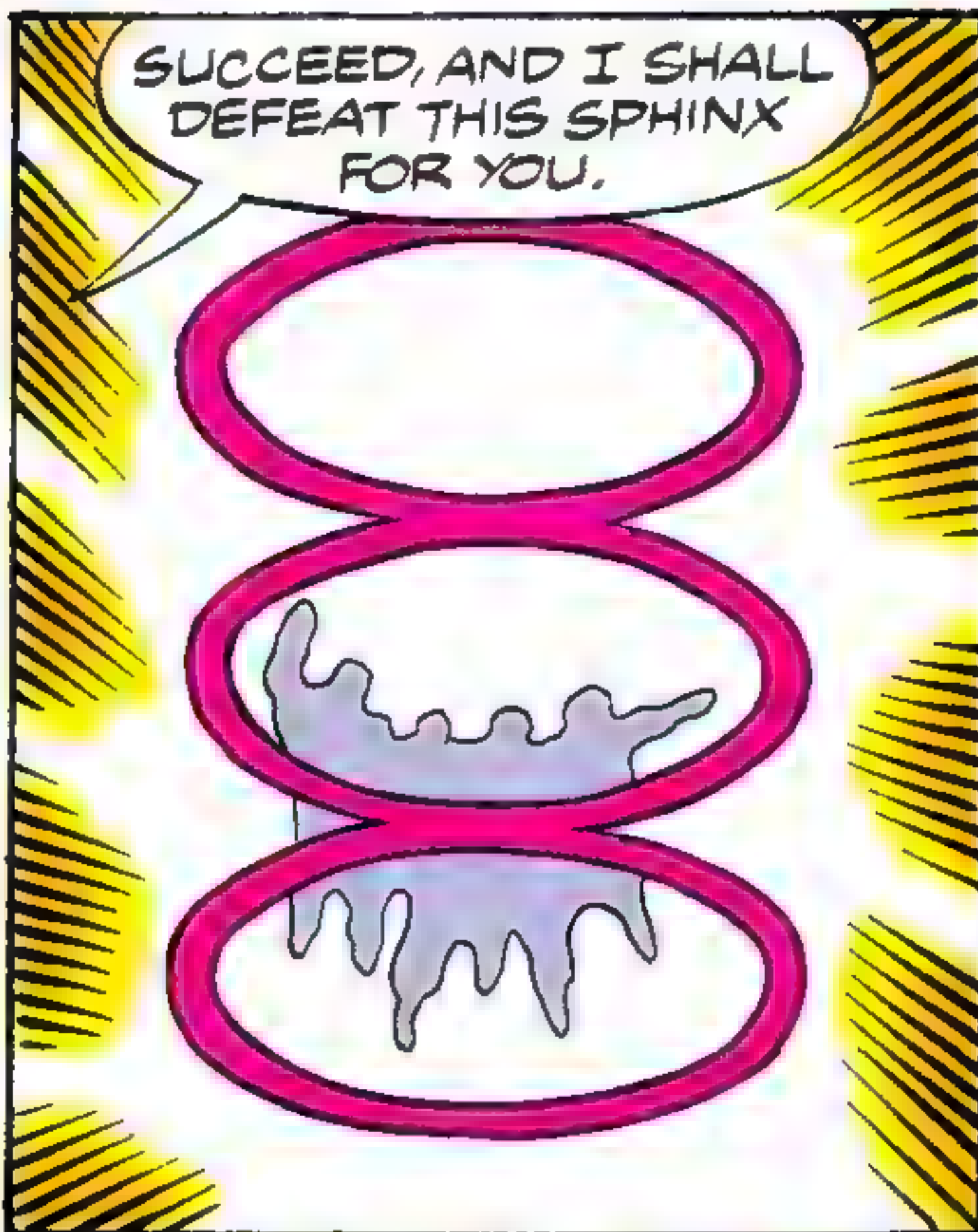
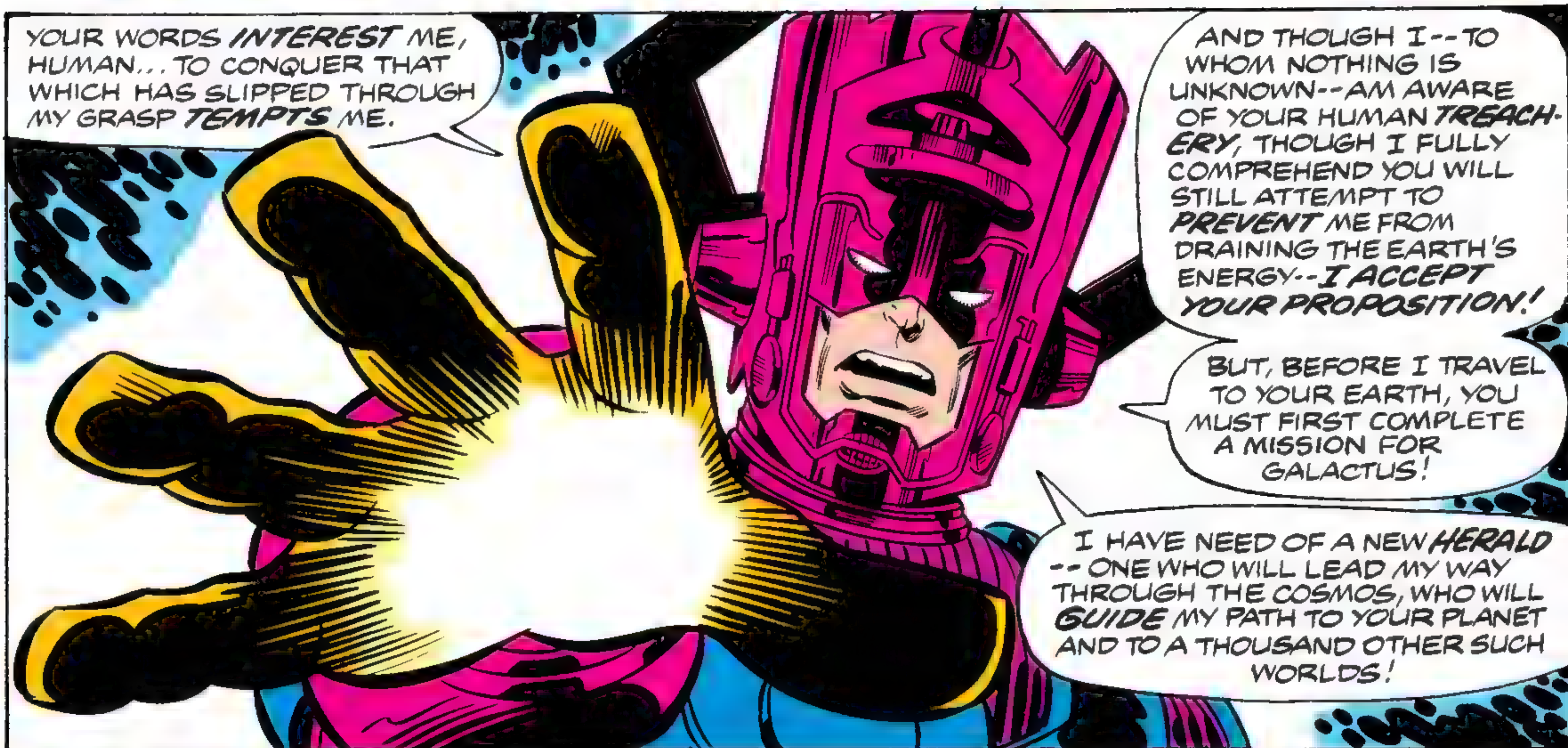
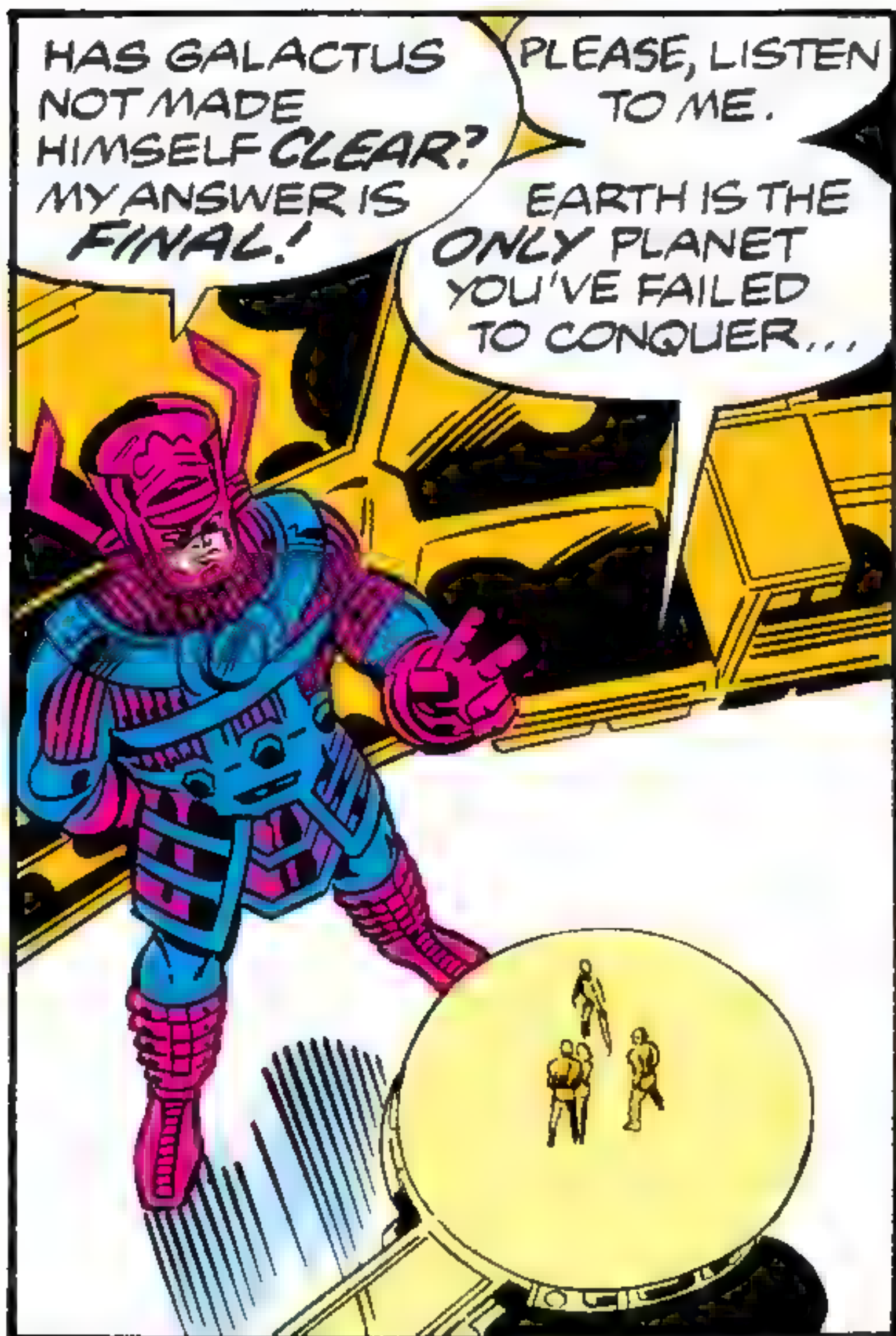


WHAAA? WE HOPSCOTCH HALF
WAY ACROSS THE GALAXY JUST
FER YOU TO TELL US TA **GET**
LOST?

IT AIN'T
FAIR!

REED! IF
GALACTUS
WON'T HELP
US, THEN THE
EARTH IS
DOOMED!

NOT YET,
JOHNNY. GALACTUS,
I HAVE A **PROPOSITION**
FOR YOU--



NEXT ISSUE: GALACTUS' HERALD--REVEALED! **IF THIS BE TERRAX!** 'NUFF SAID!

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FANTASTIC FOUR®

BEHOLD:
TERRAX
THE TAMER!



BARNE and SINNOTT

INTRODUCING
A NEW
SUPERSTAR
IN THE
MIGHTY MARVEL
UNIVERSE!

Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

MARV WOLFGAN
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* JOHN BYRNE & JOE SINNOTT
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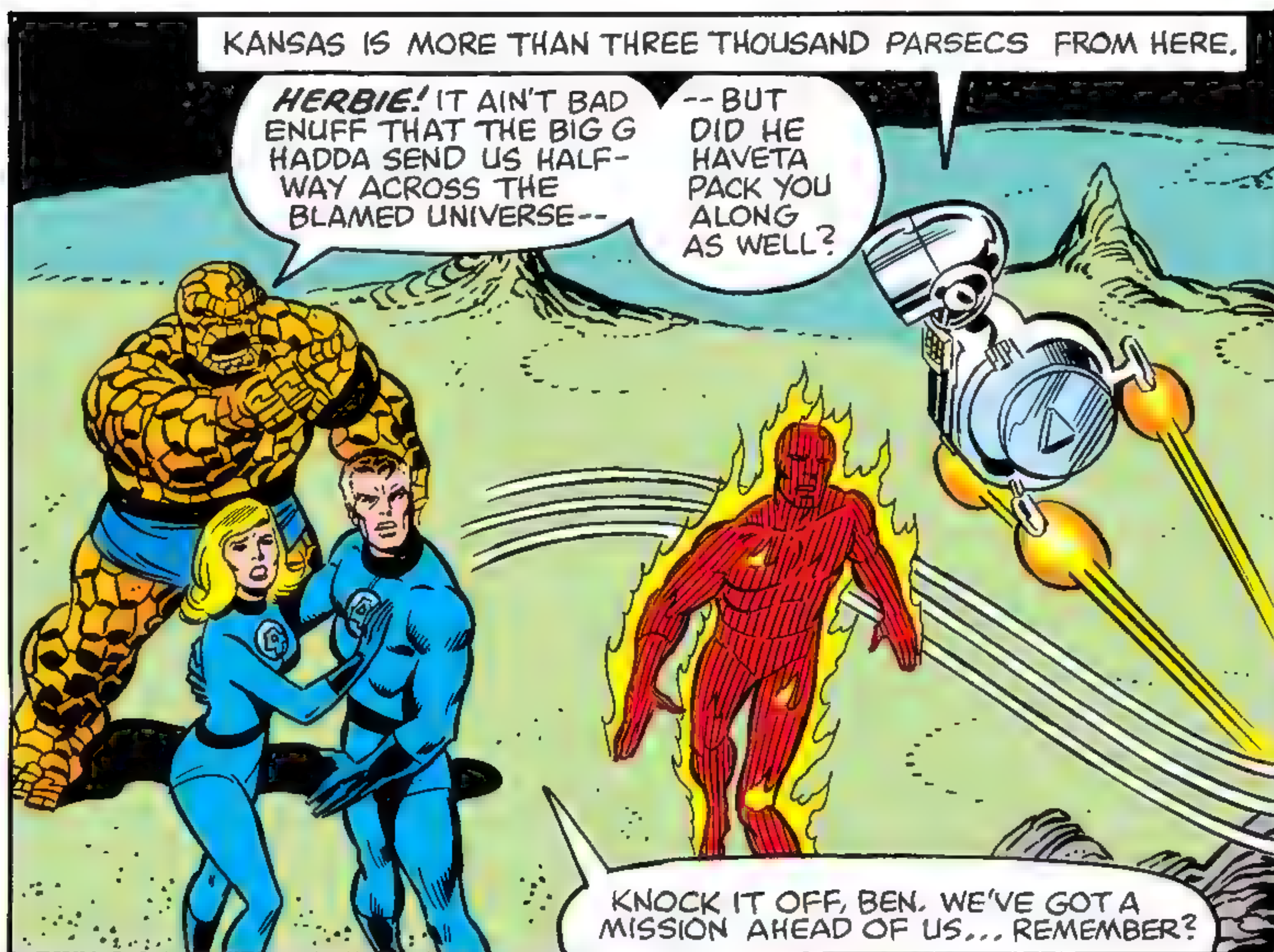
* JOE ROSEN
FINISHES

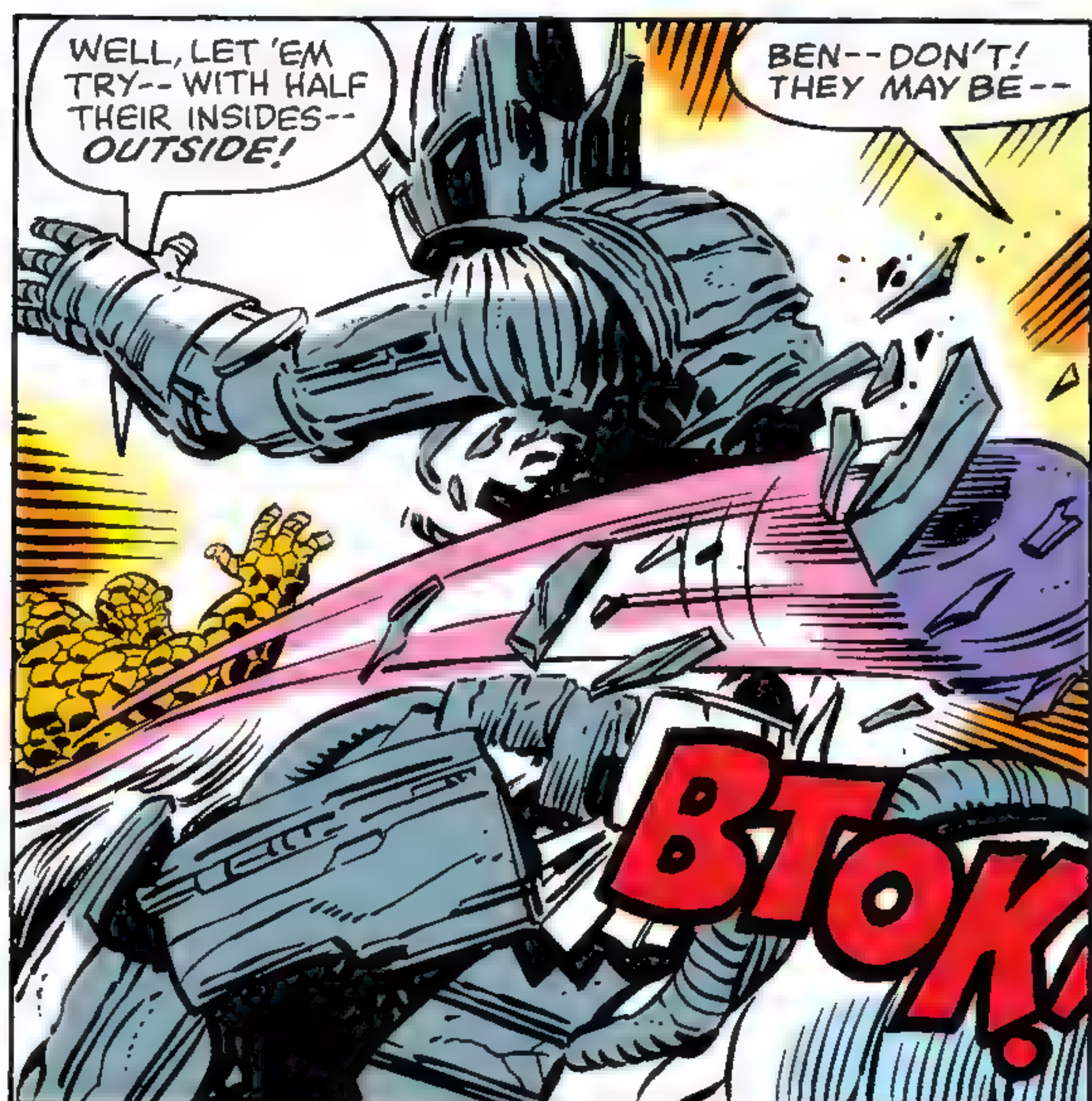
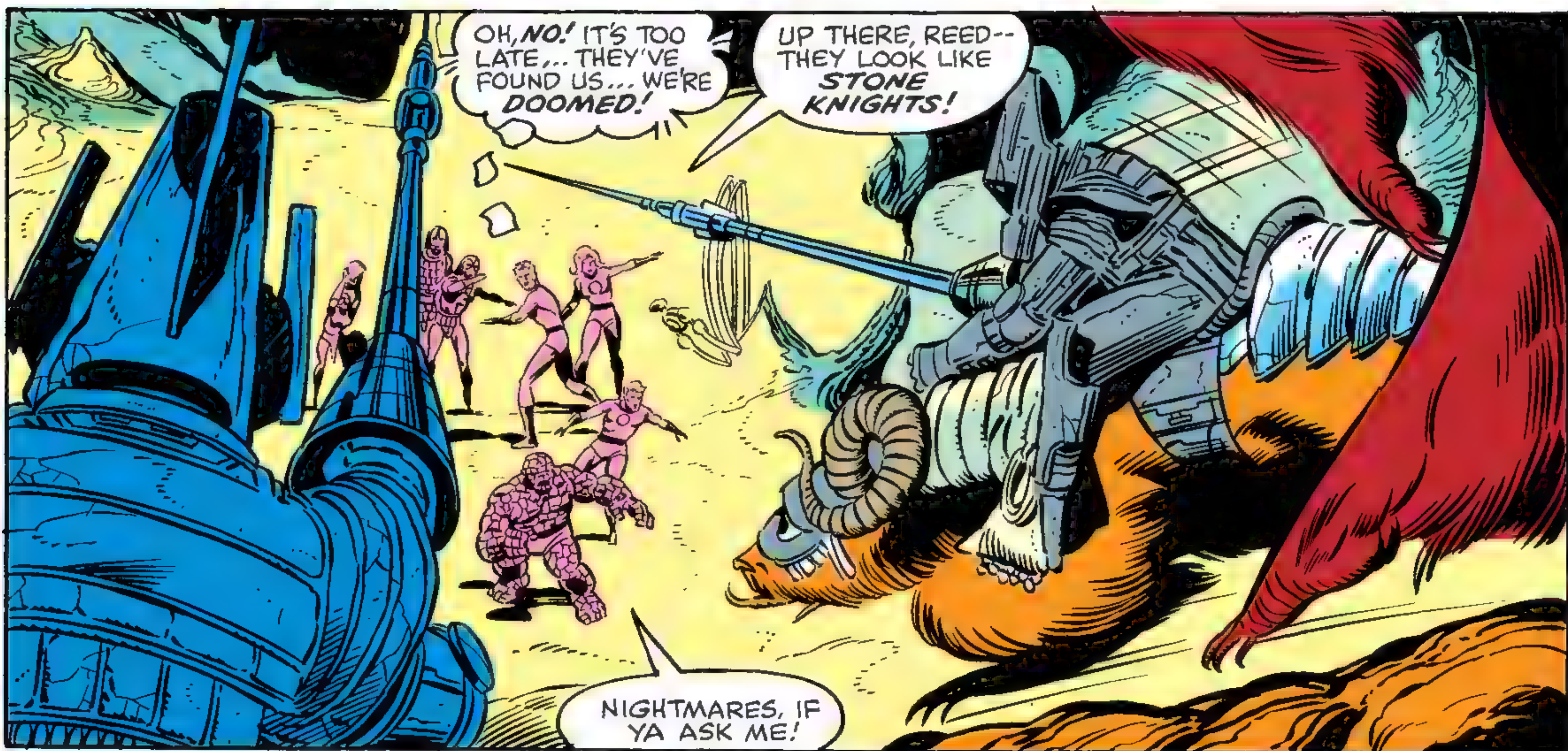
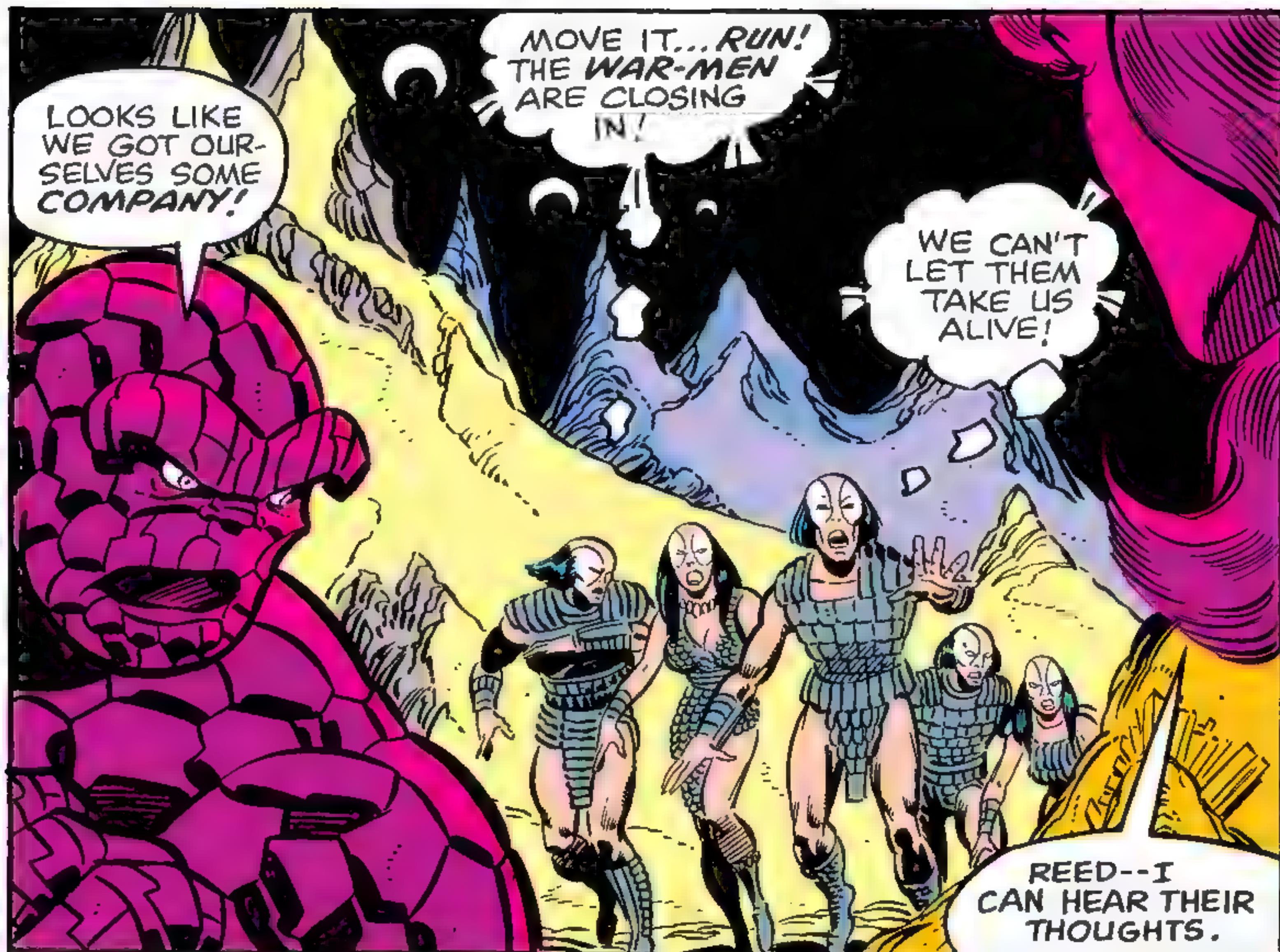
* JOE ROSEN
LETTERS

* BEN SEAN
COLORS

* JIM SHOOTER
CONSULTING EDITS









THEY'RE **ROBOTS!** WE DON'T HAVE TO PULL ANY PUNCHES!

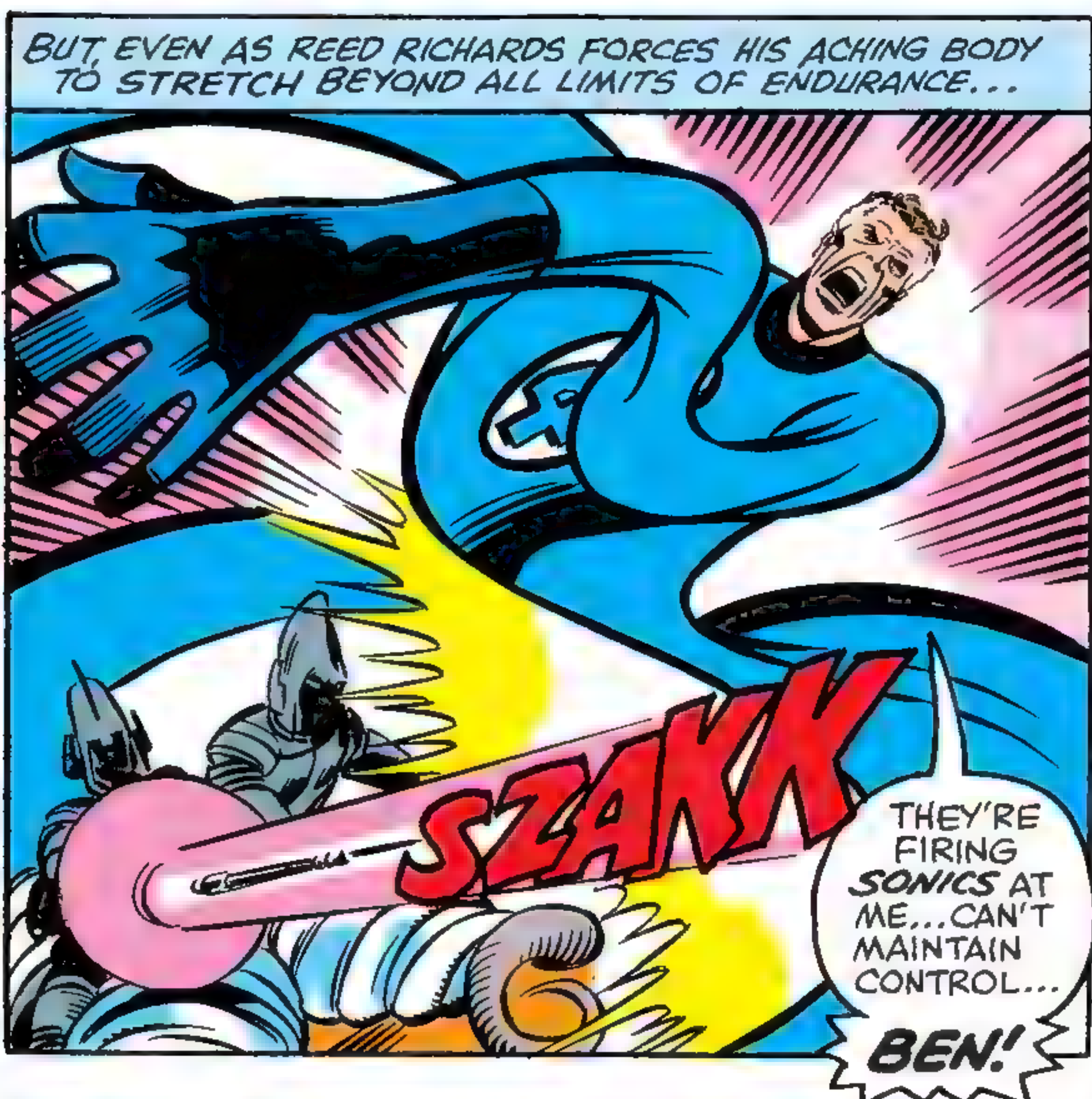
NO! DO NOT ATTACK THE WAR-MEN!

COME ON-- LET'S MOVE IT!



SORRY, MISTER, BUT THEY SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT ATTACKING US FIRST!

BESIDES WHICH, WE HAVEN'T THE TIME TO WASTE HERE... WE'VE GOT TO RETURN TO GALACTUS' SHIP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP THE SPHINX!

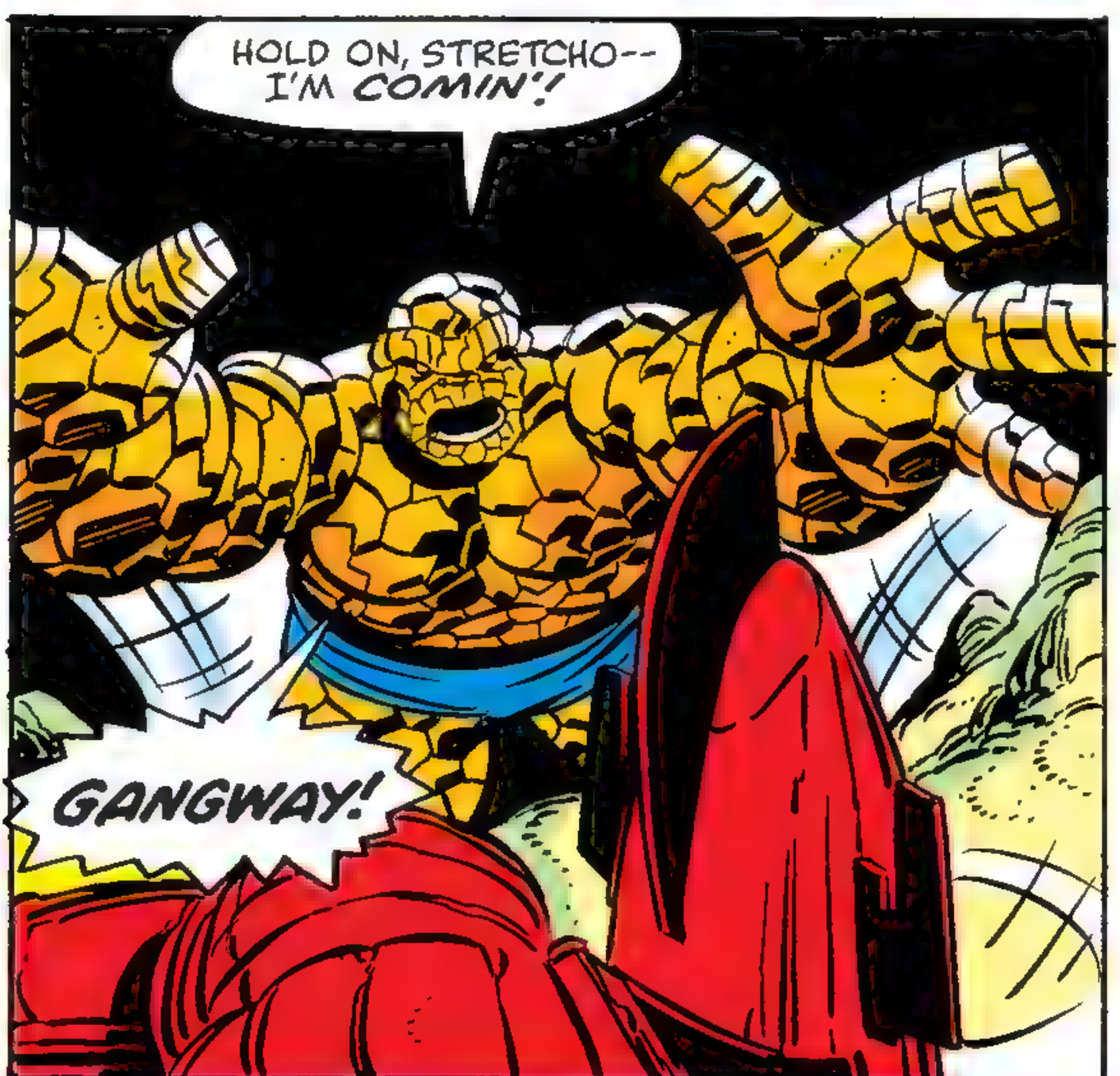


BUT, EVEN AS REED RICHARDS FORCES HIS ACHING BODY TO STRETCH BEYOND ALL LIMITS OF ENDURANCE...

SZAKK

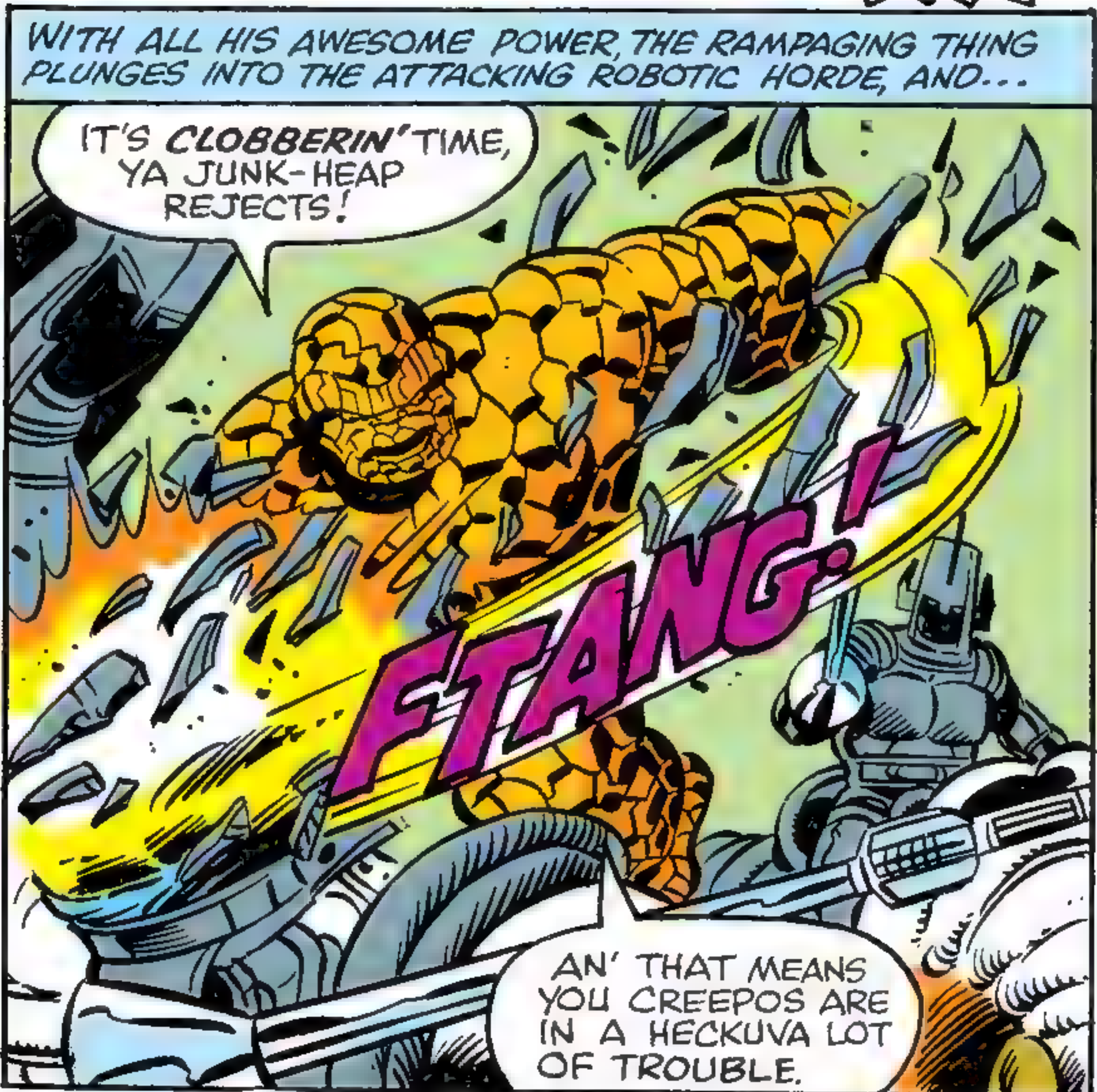
THEY'RE FIRING **SONICS** AT ME... CAN'T MAINTAIN CONTROL...

BEN!



HOLD ON, STRETCHO-- I'M **COMIN'!**

GANGWAY!

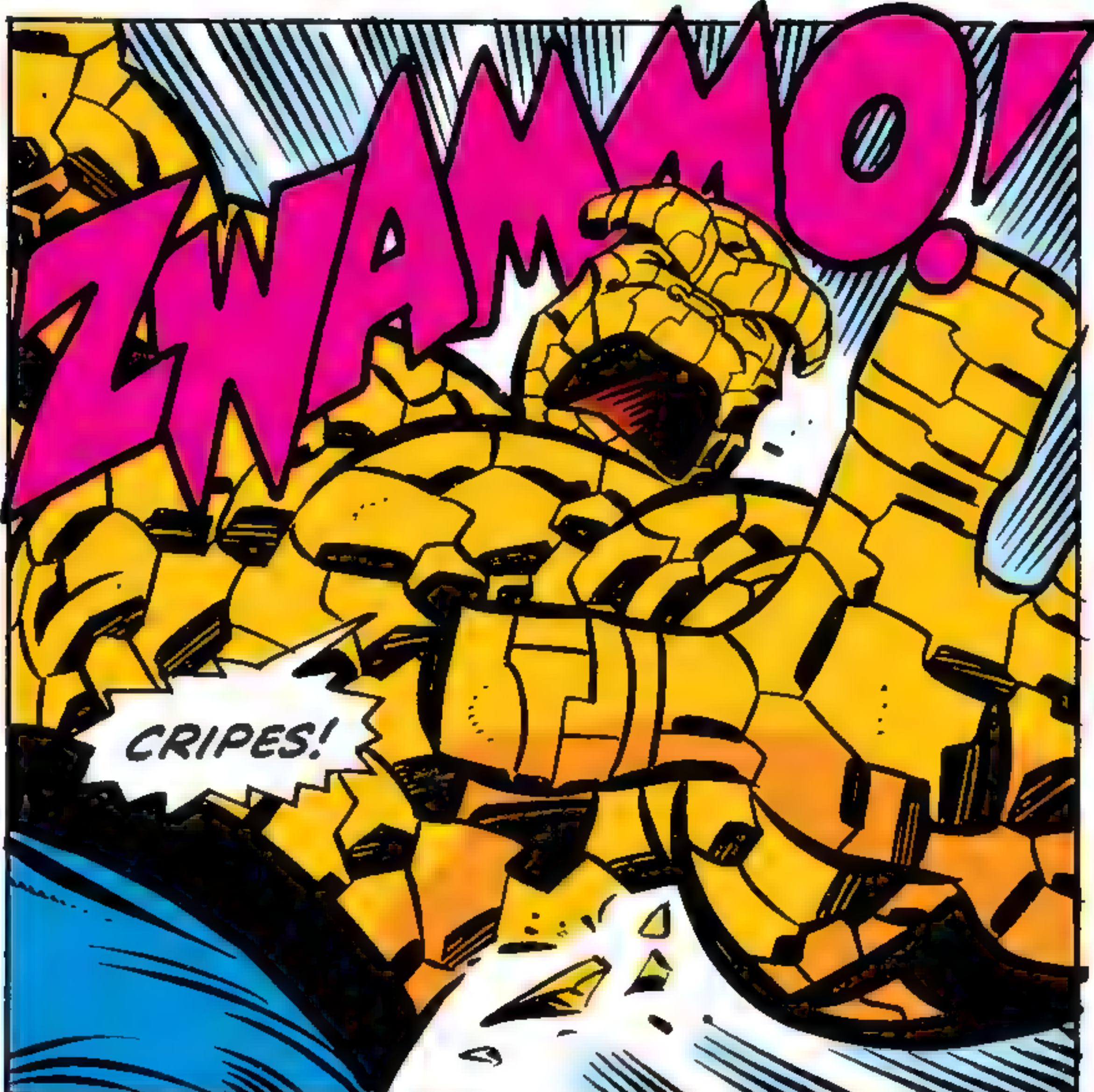


WITH ALL HIS AWESOME POWER, THE RAMPAGING THING PLUNGES INTO THE ATTACKING ROBOTIC HORDE, AND...

IT'S **CLOBBERIN'TIME**, YA JUNK-HEAP REJECTS!

FTANG!

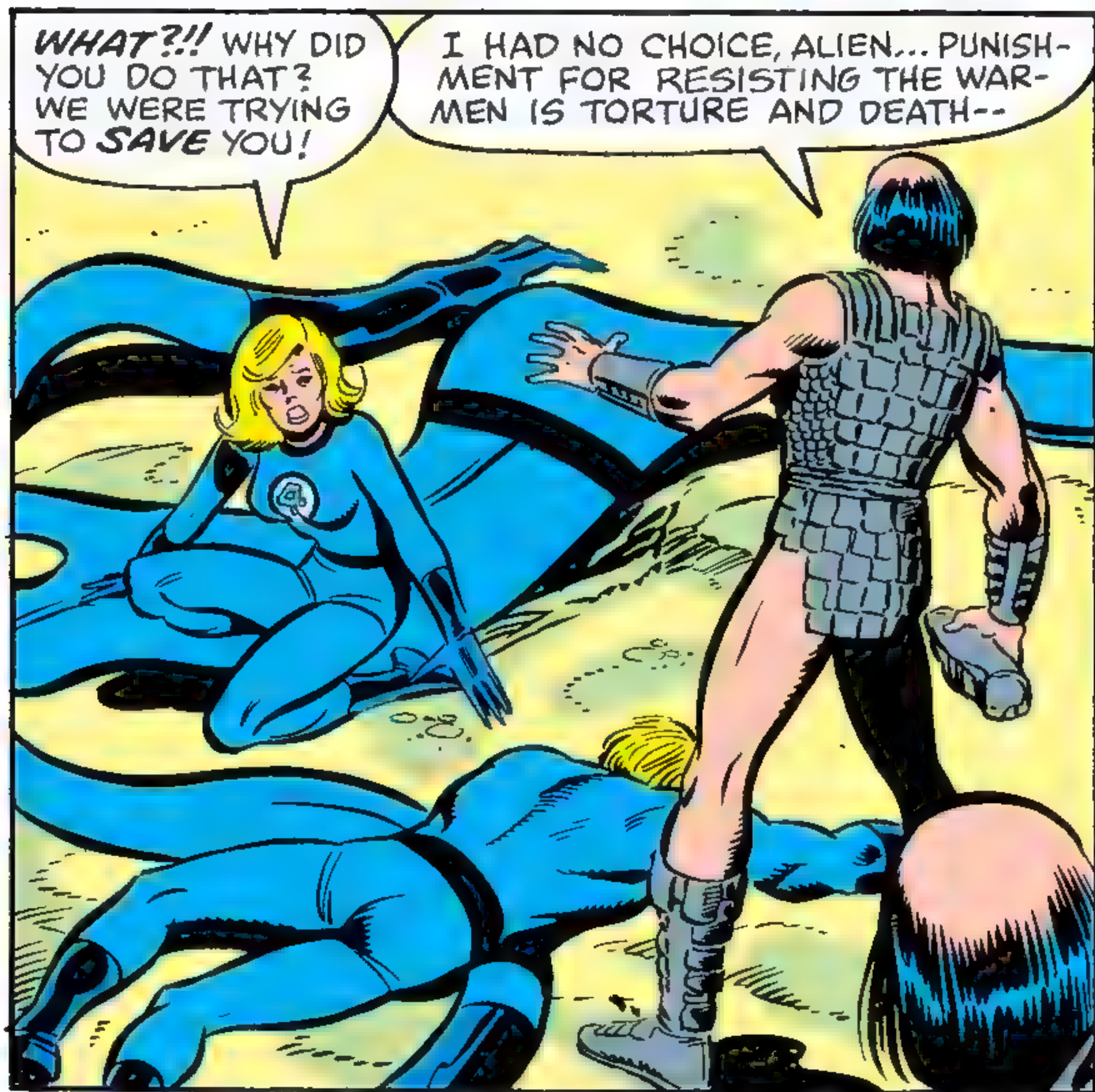
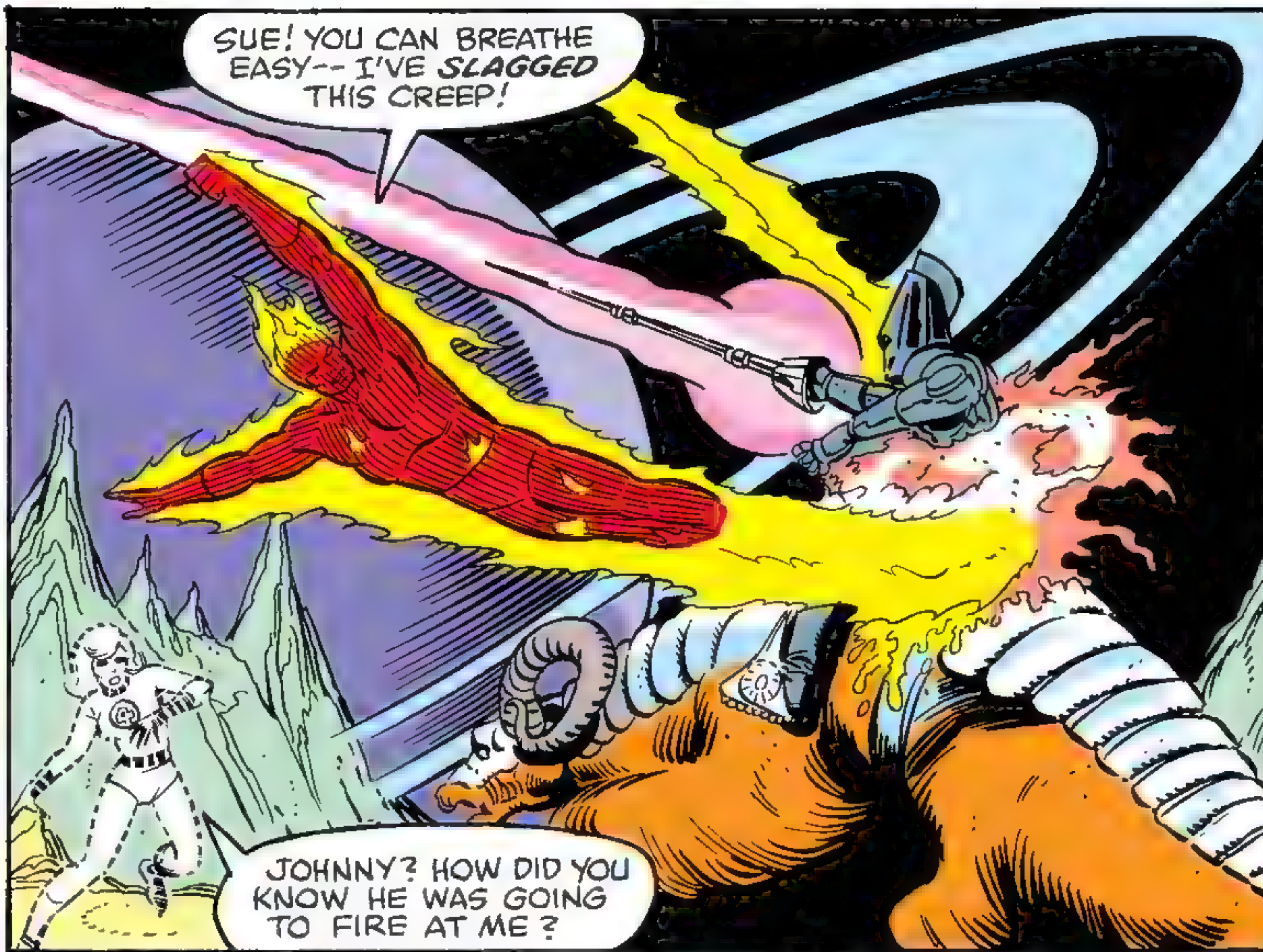
AN' THAT MEANS YOU CREEPOS ARE IN A HECKUVA LOT OF TROUBLE.

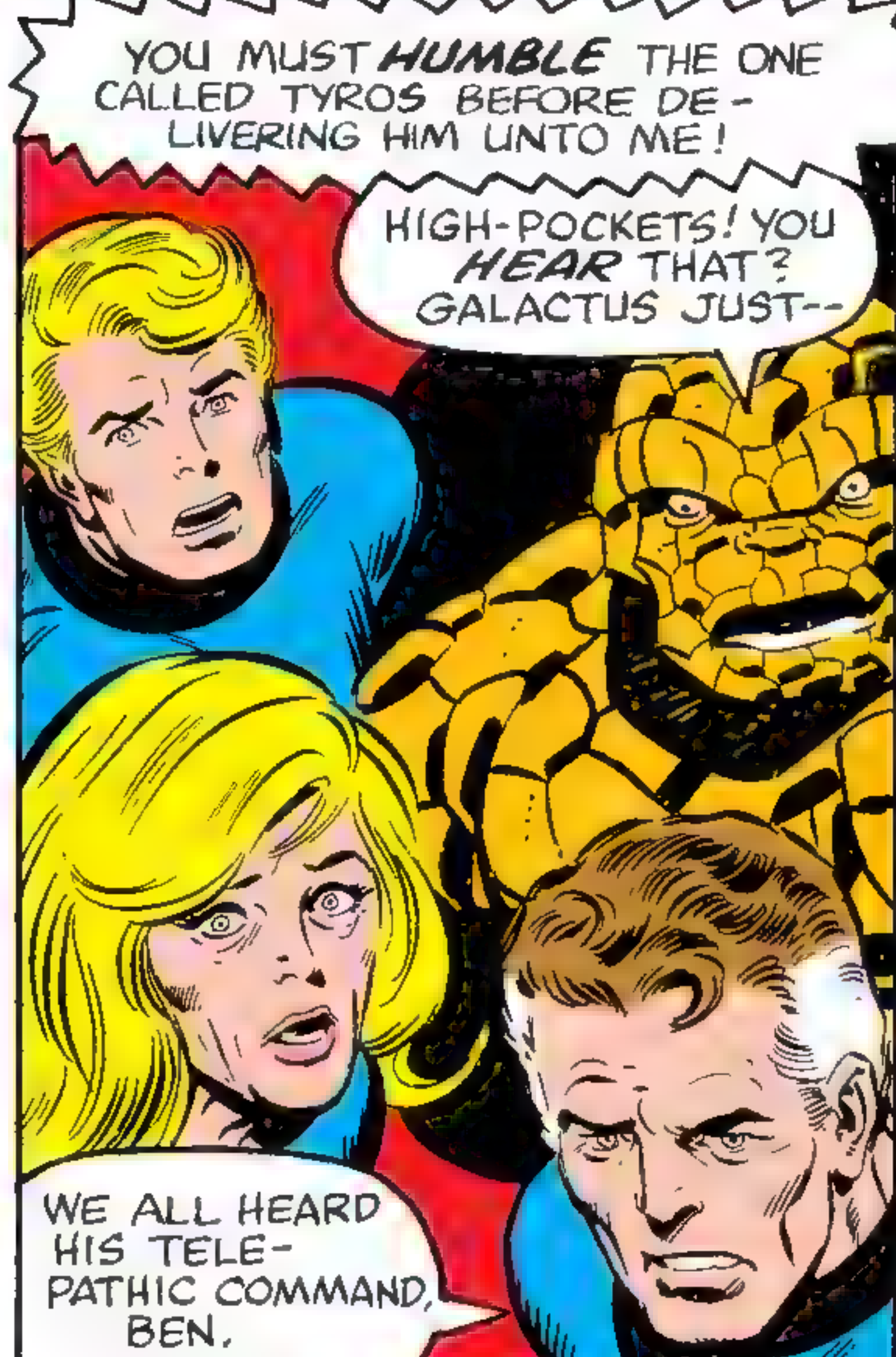
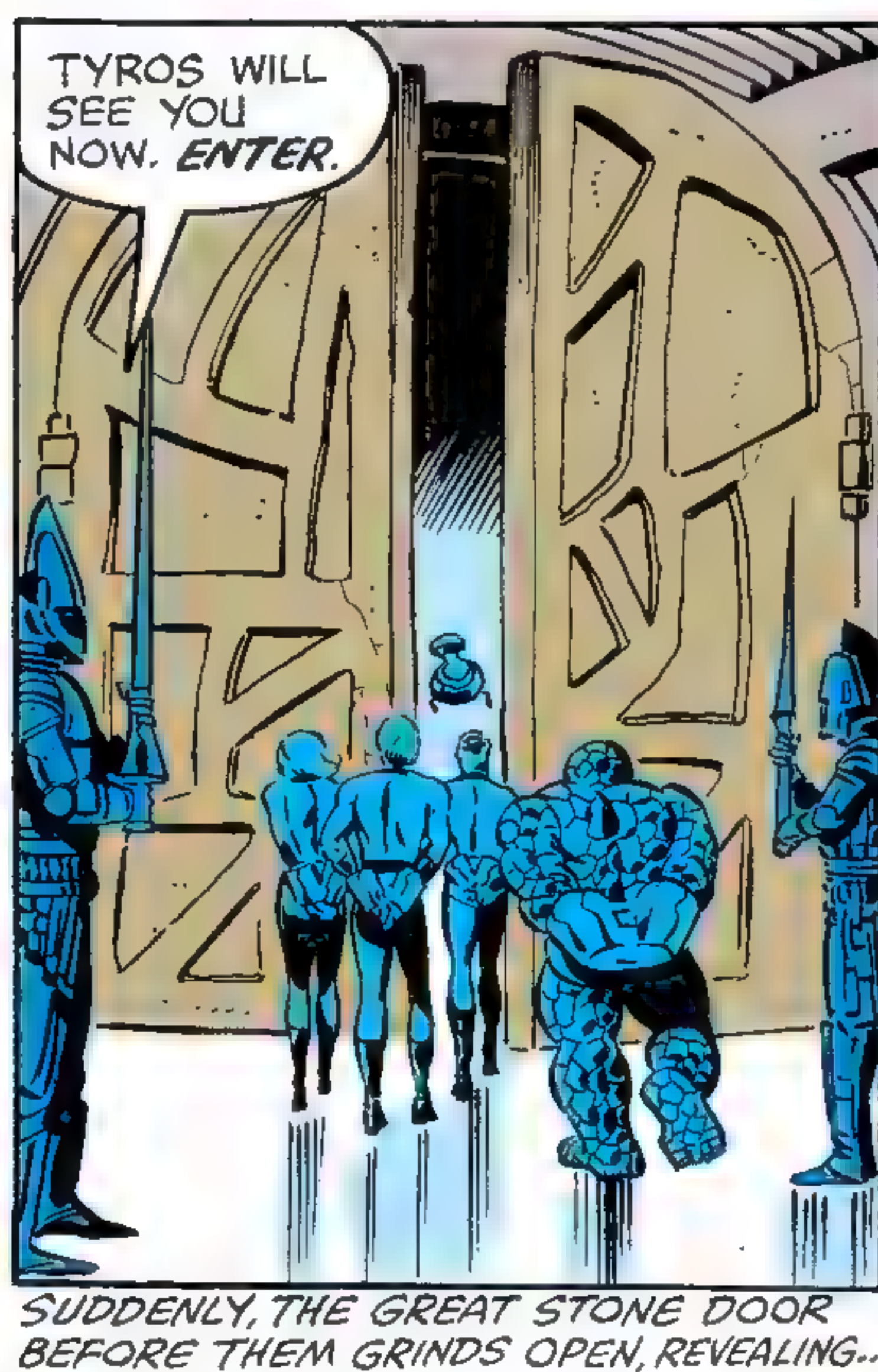
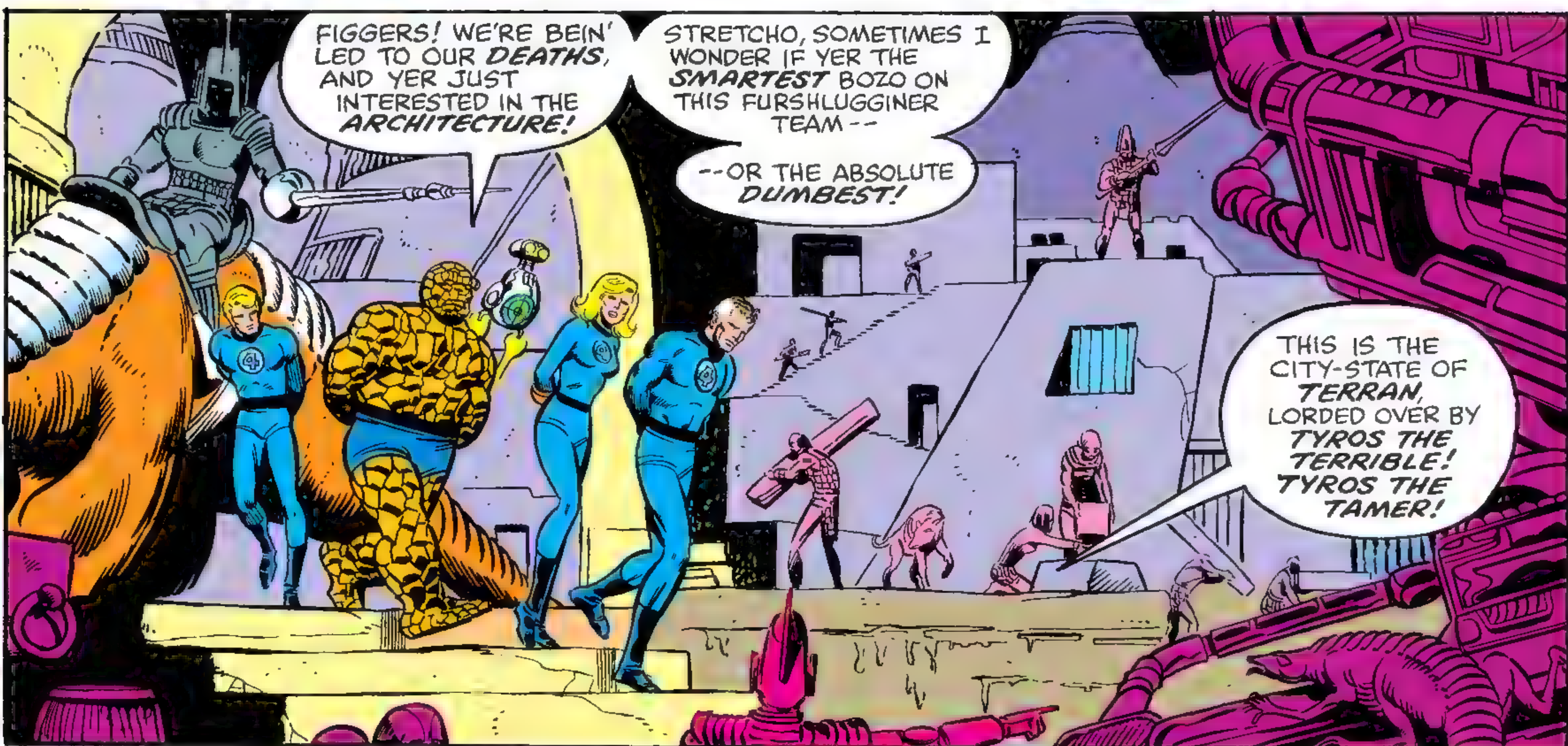
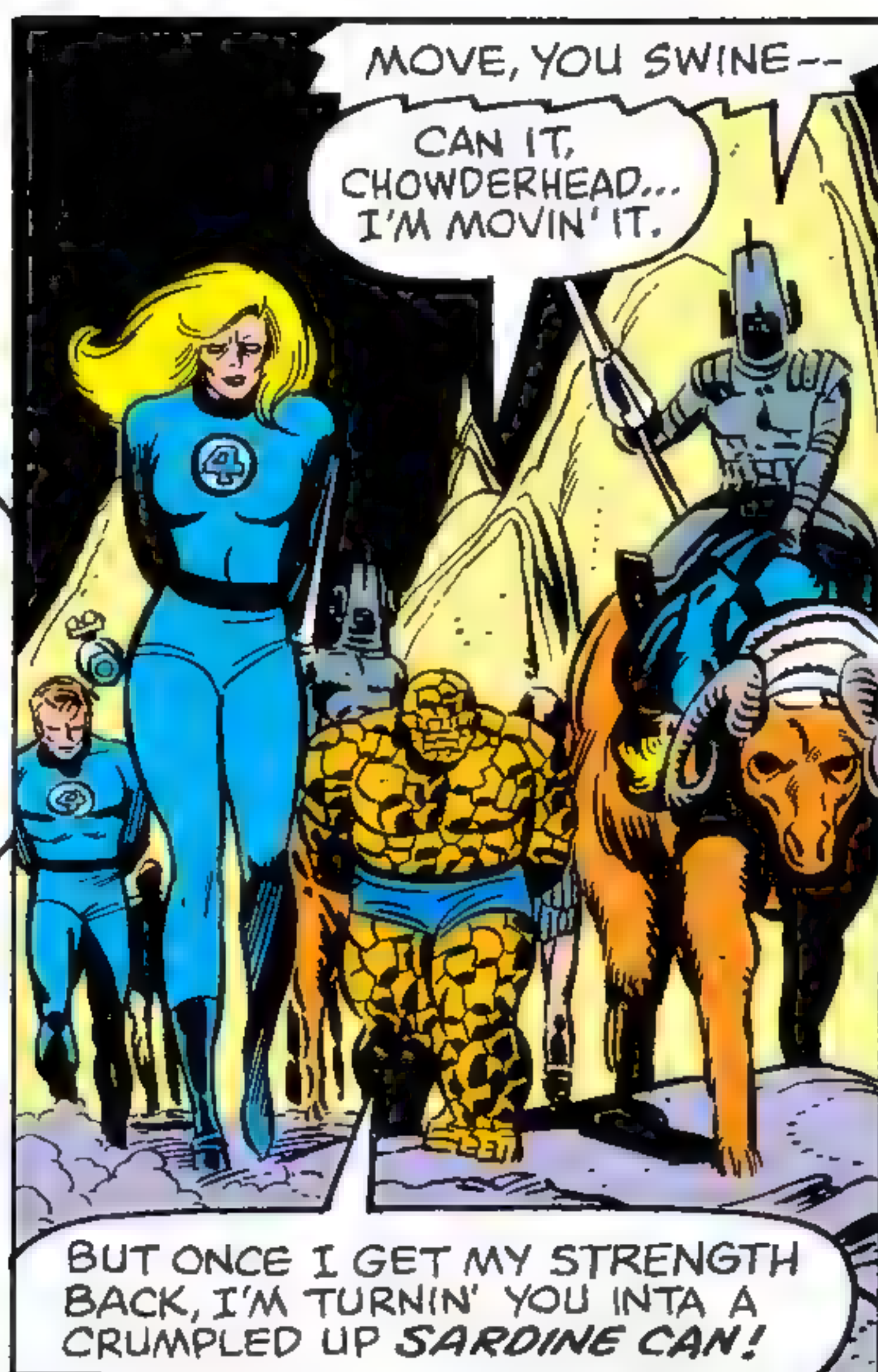
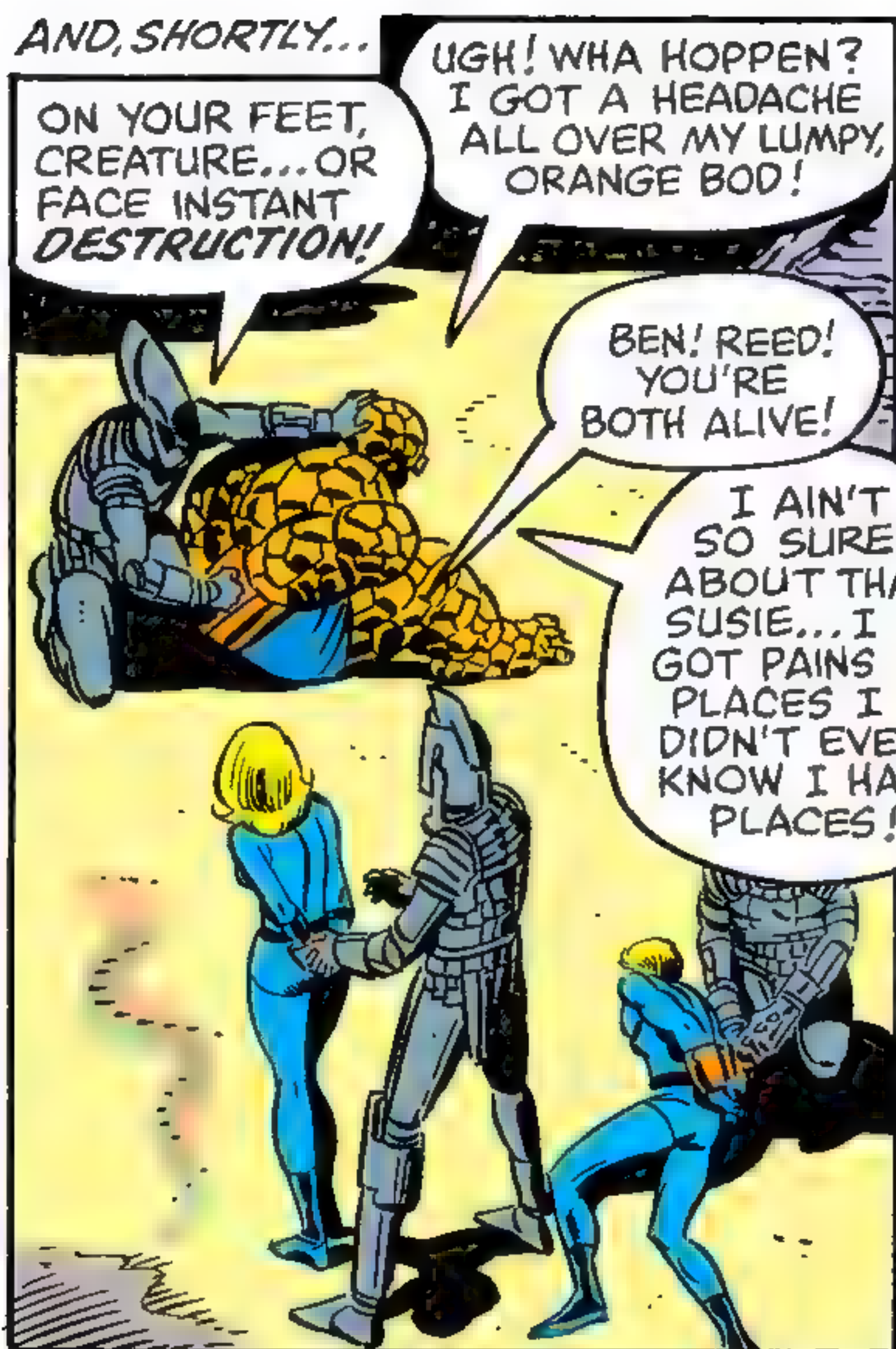


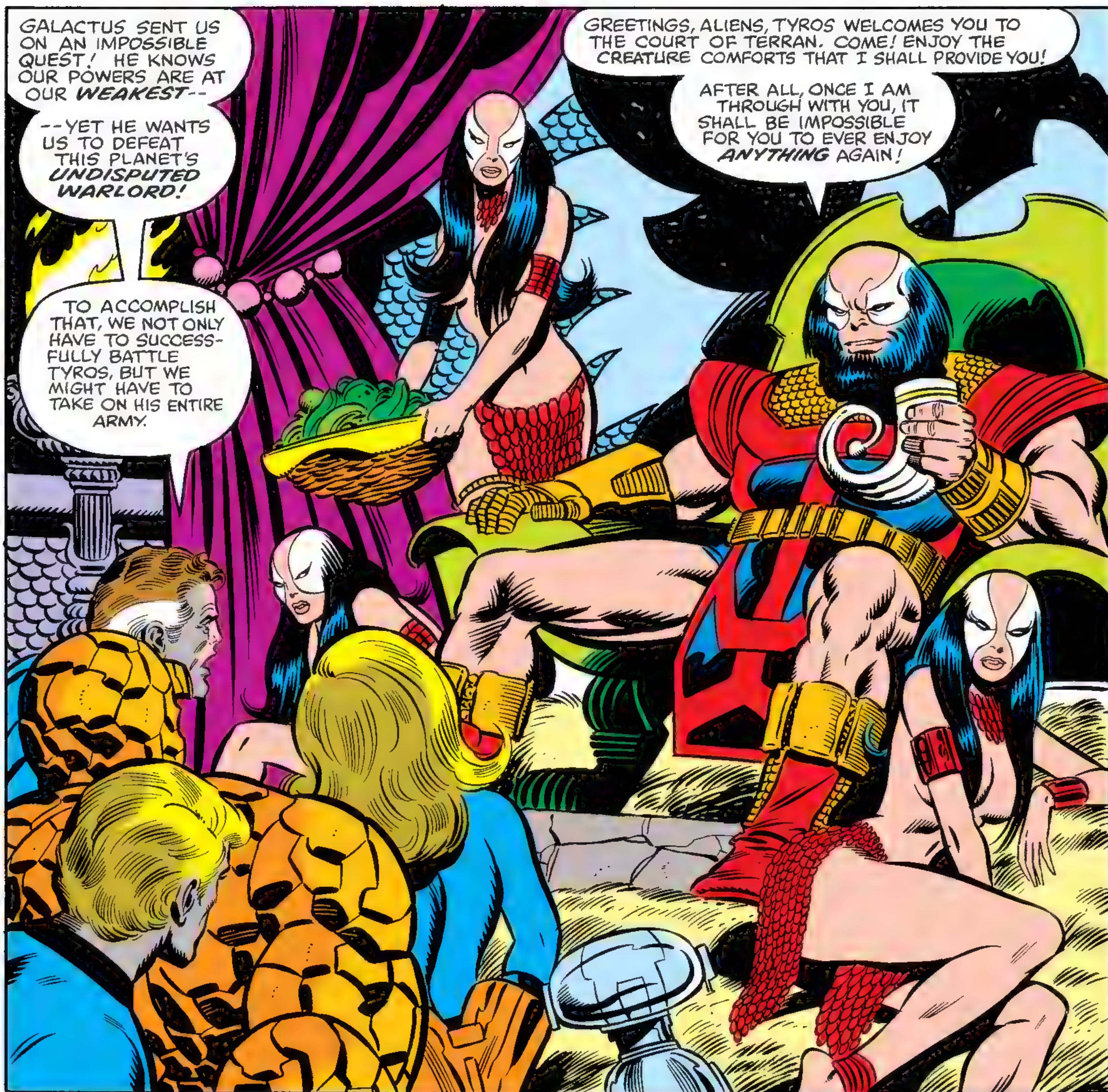
ZWAMMO!

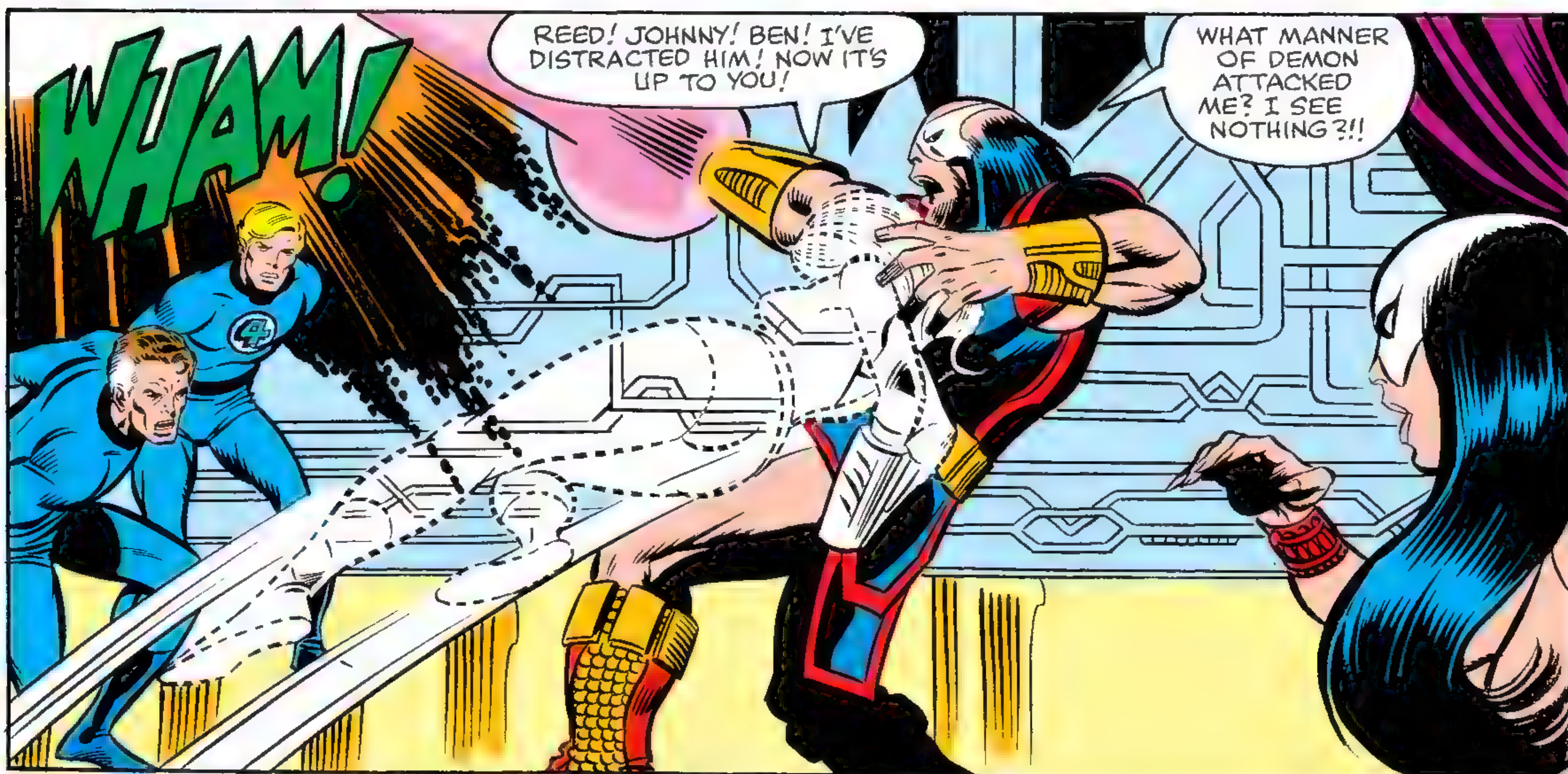
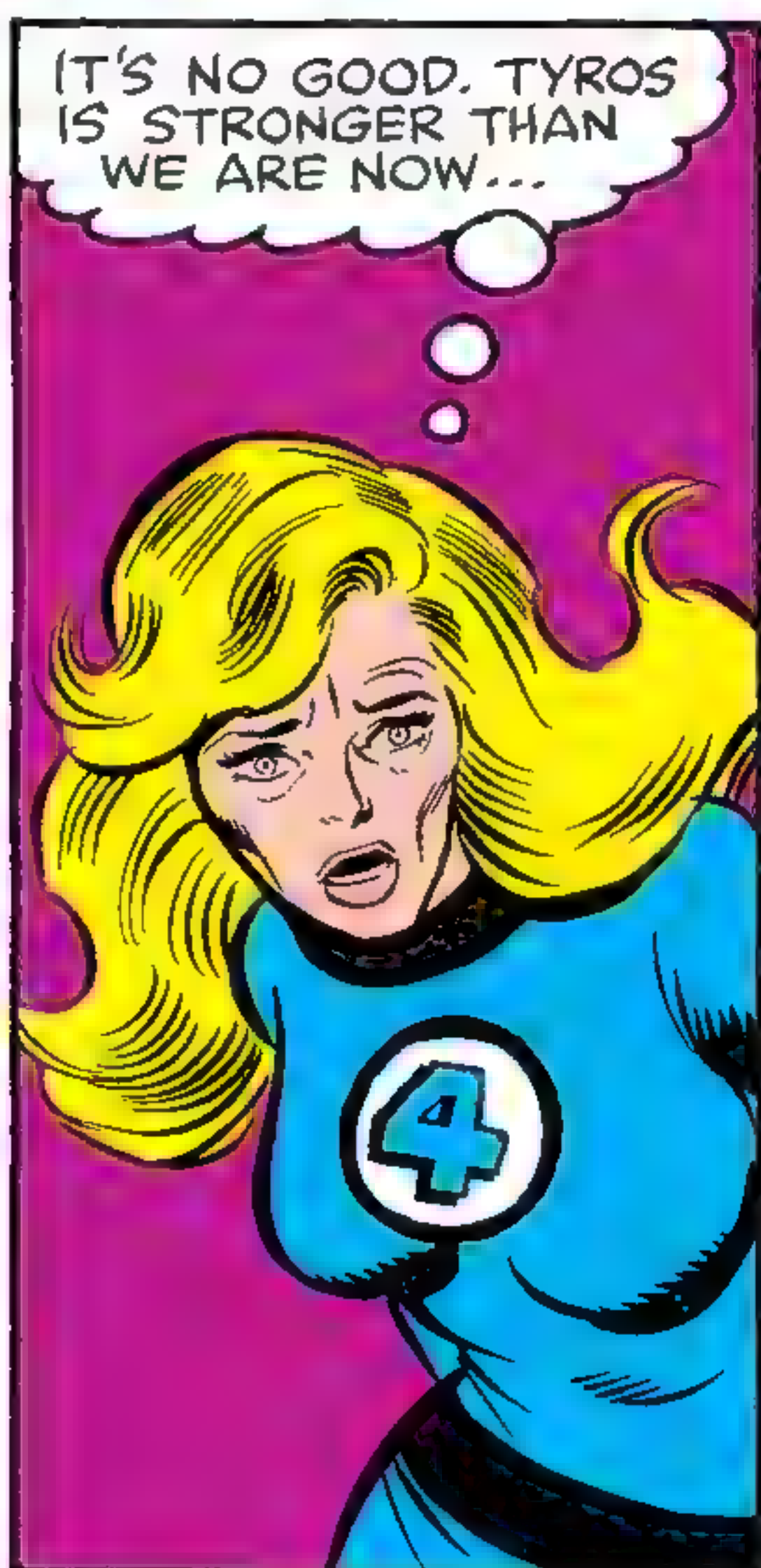
CRIPES!

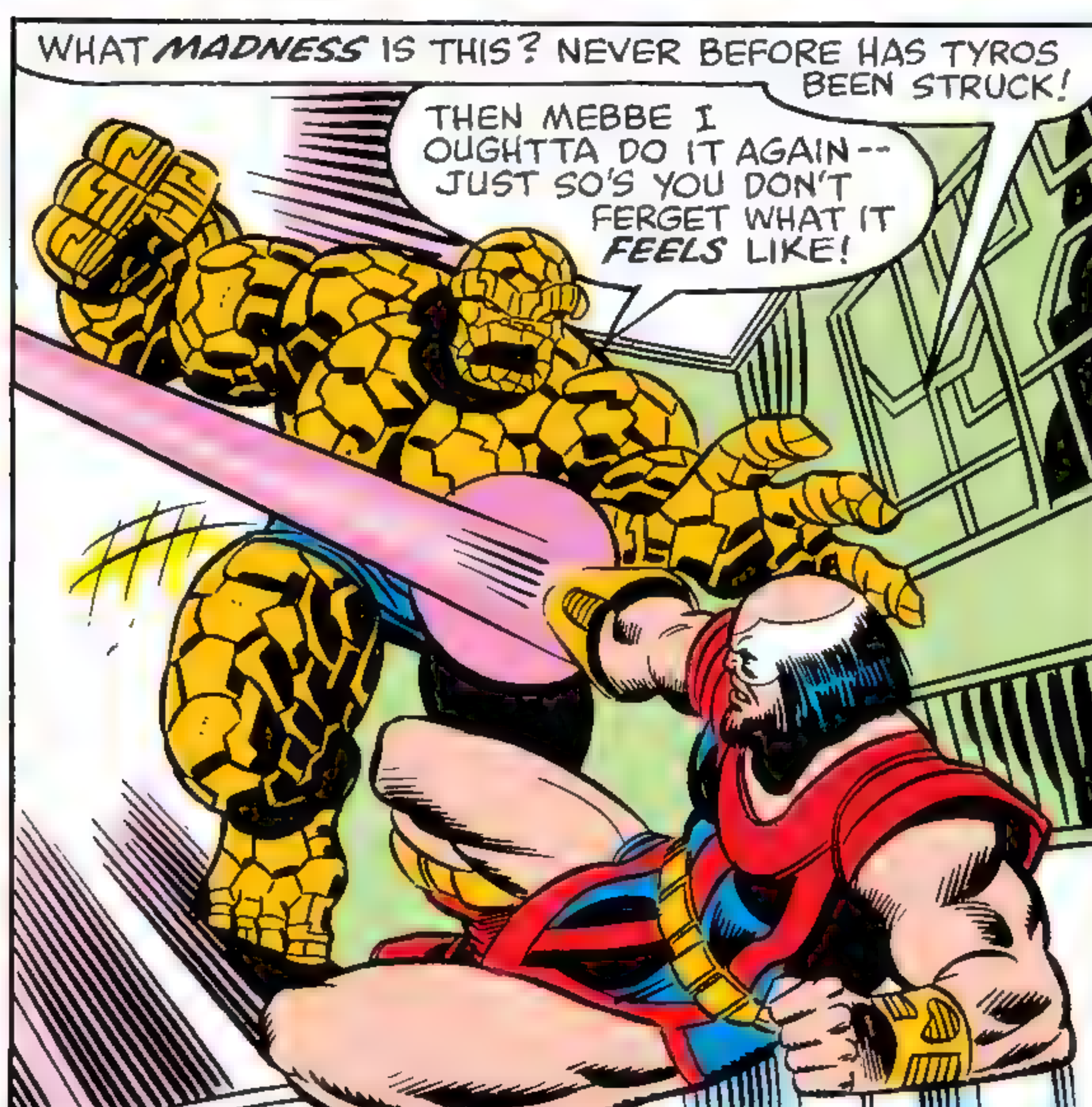
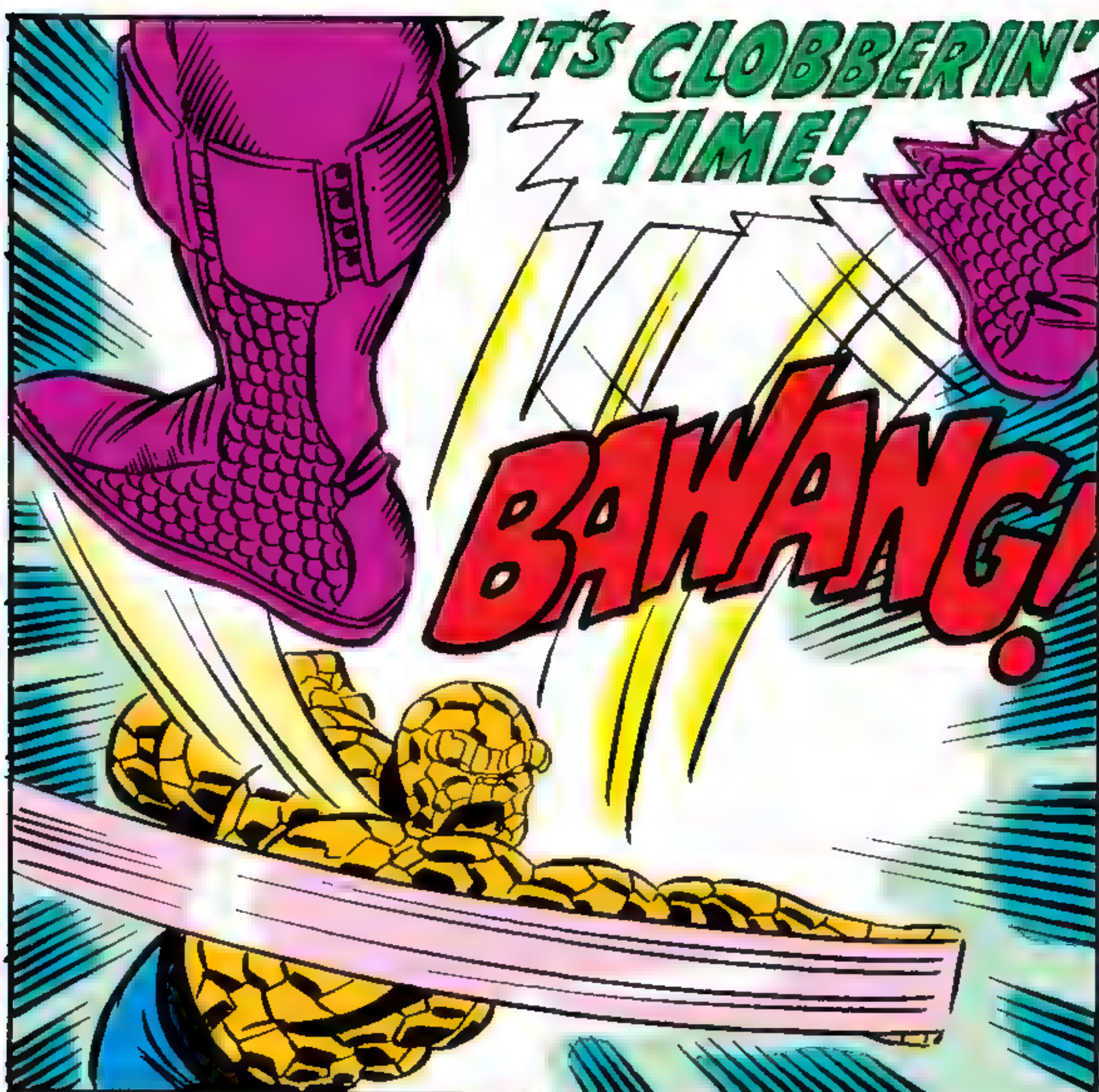
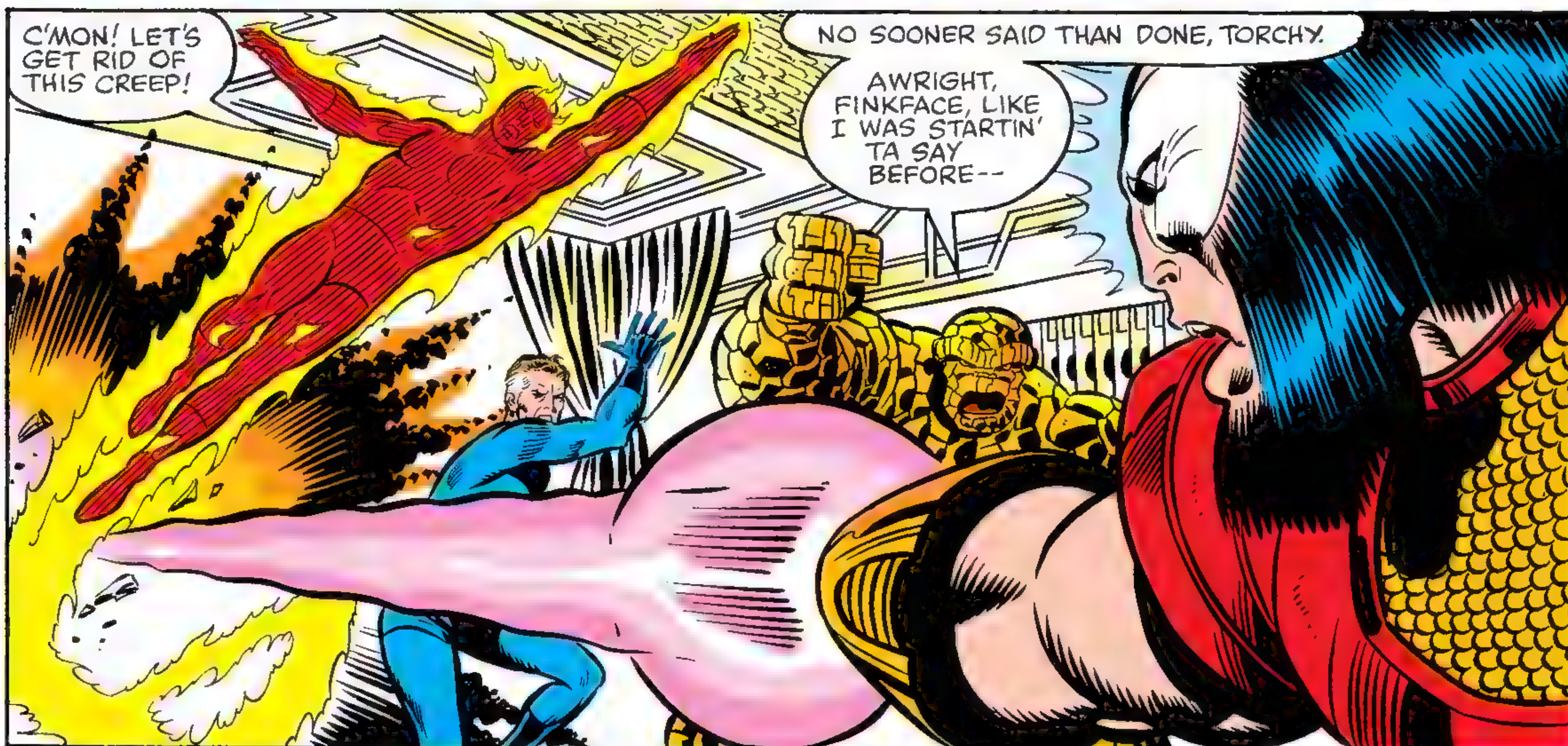
MEANWHILE...

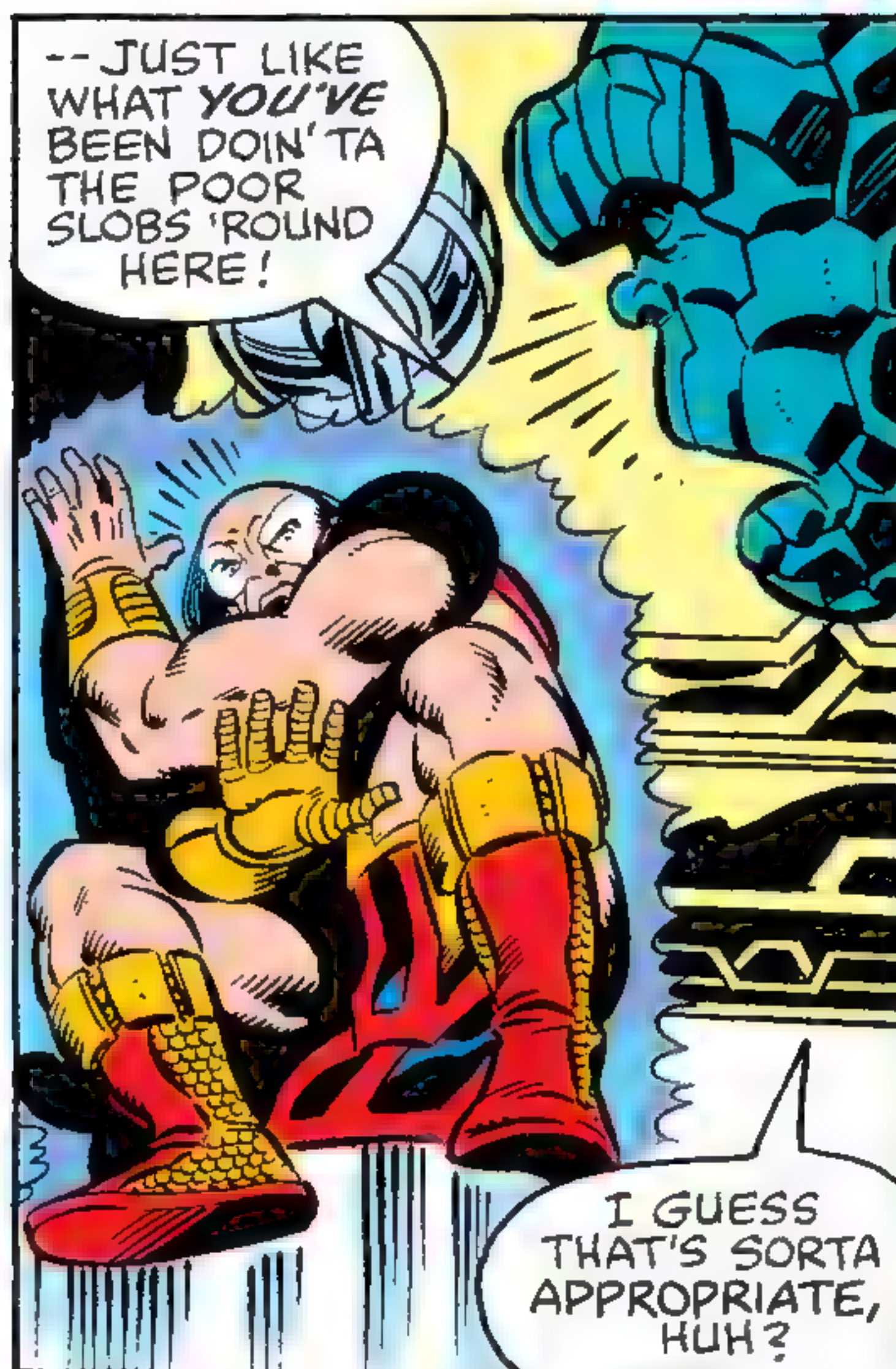
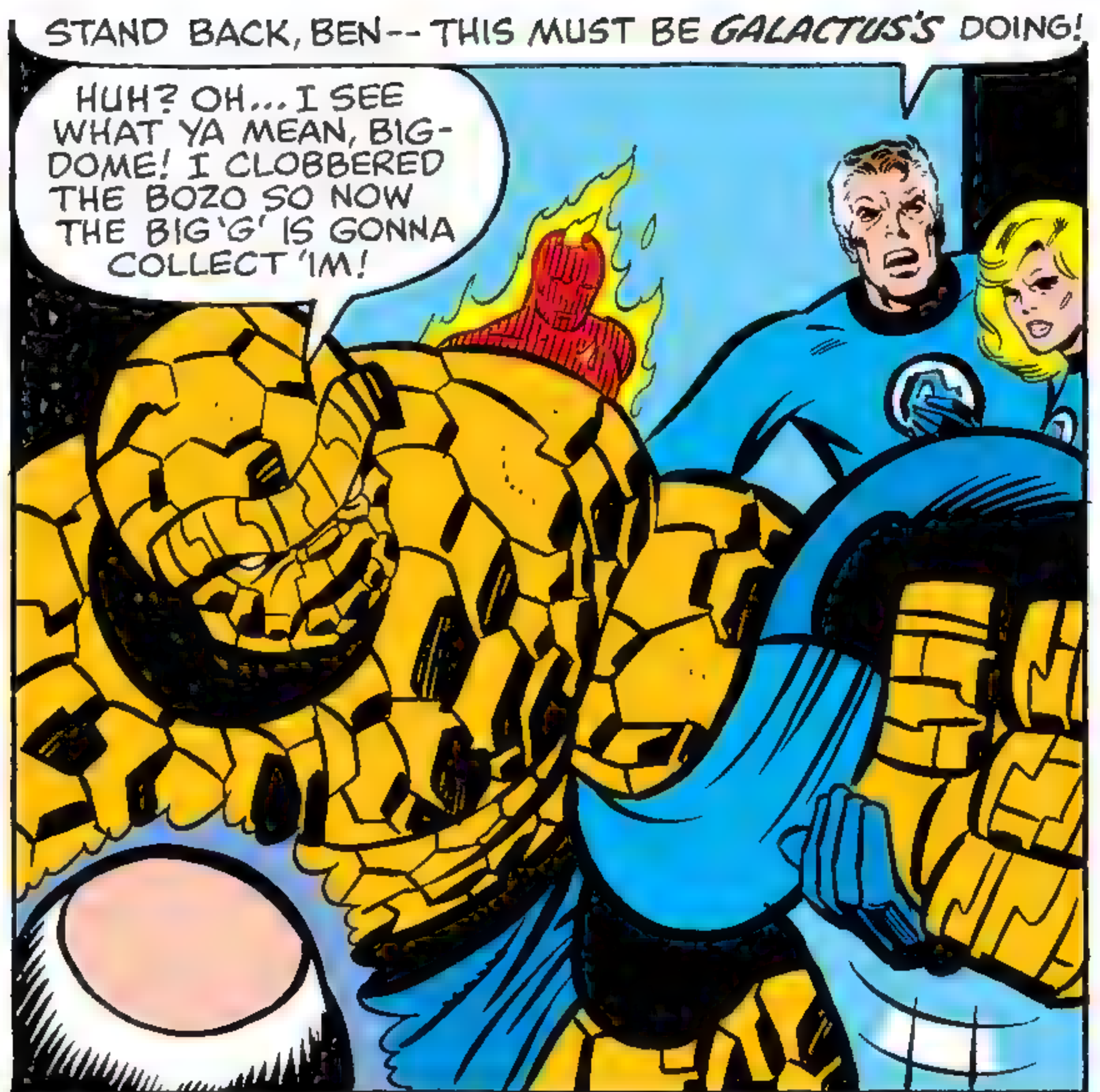


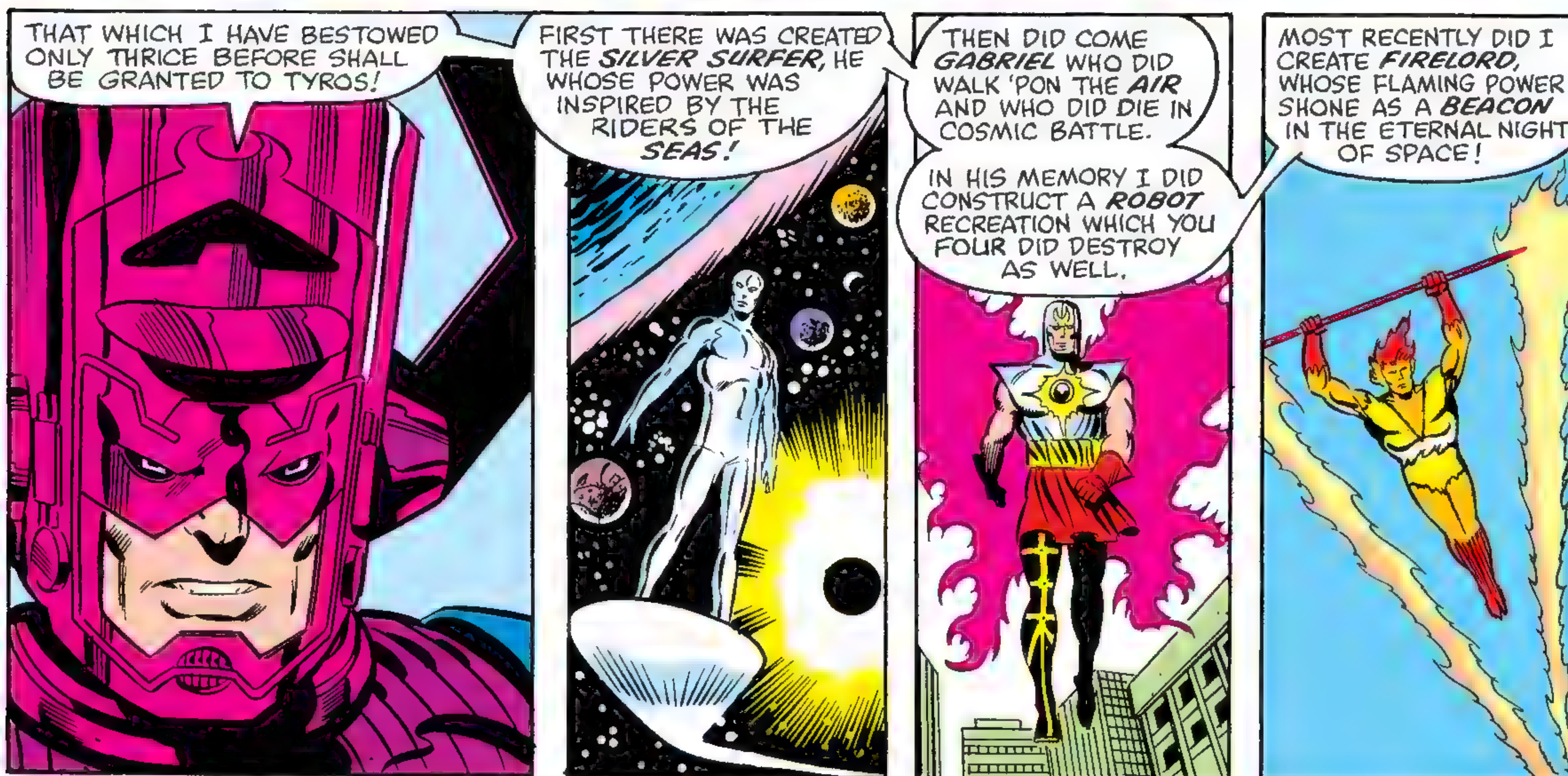
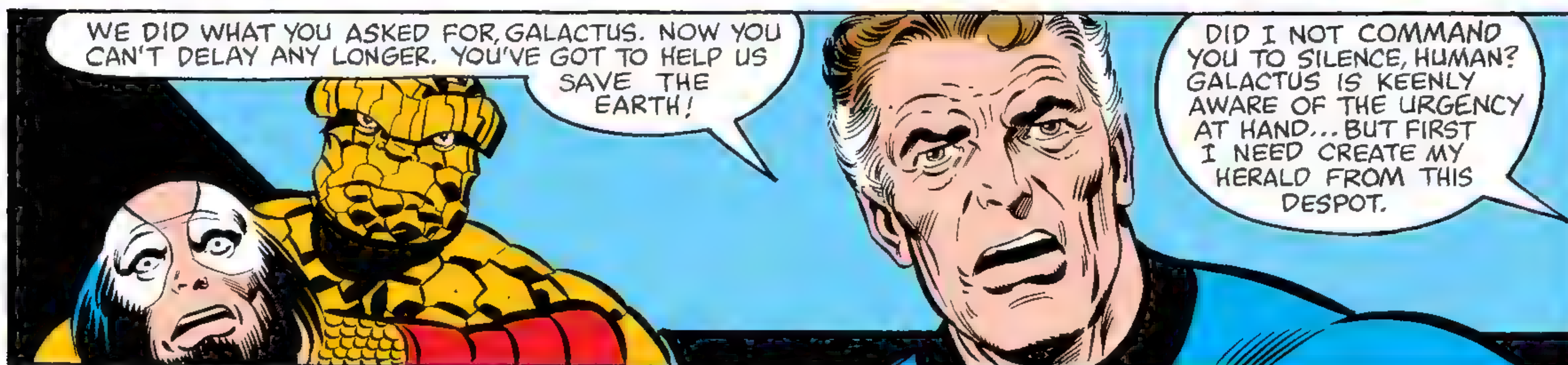
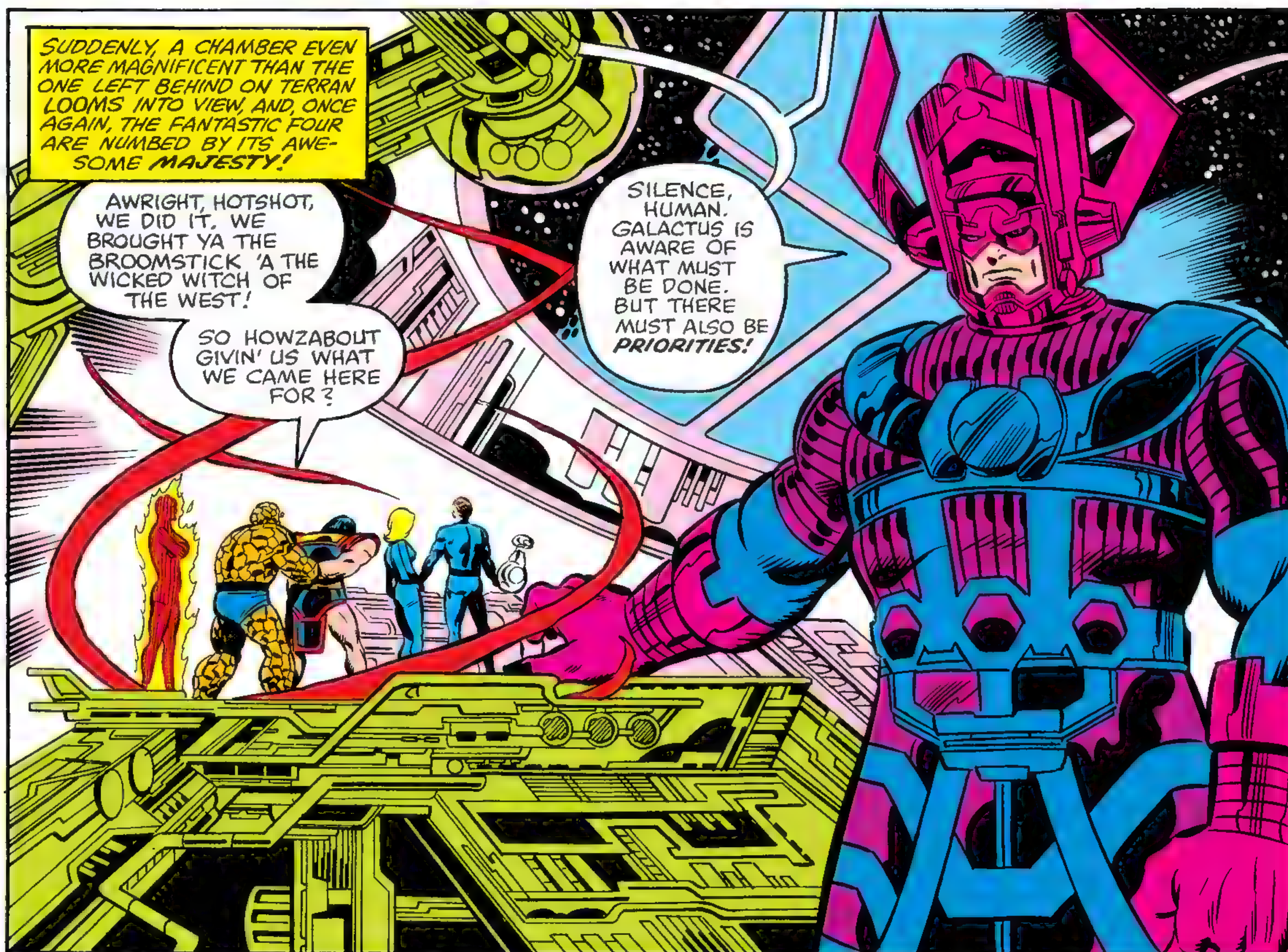






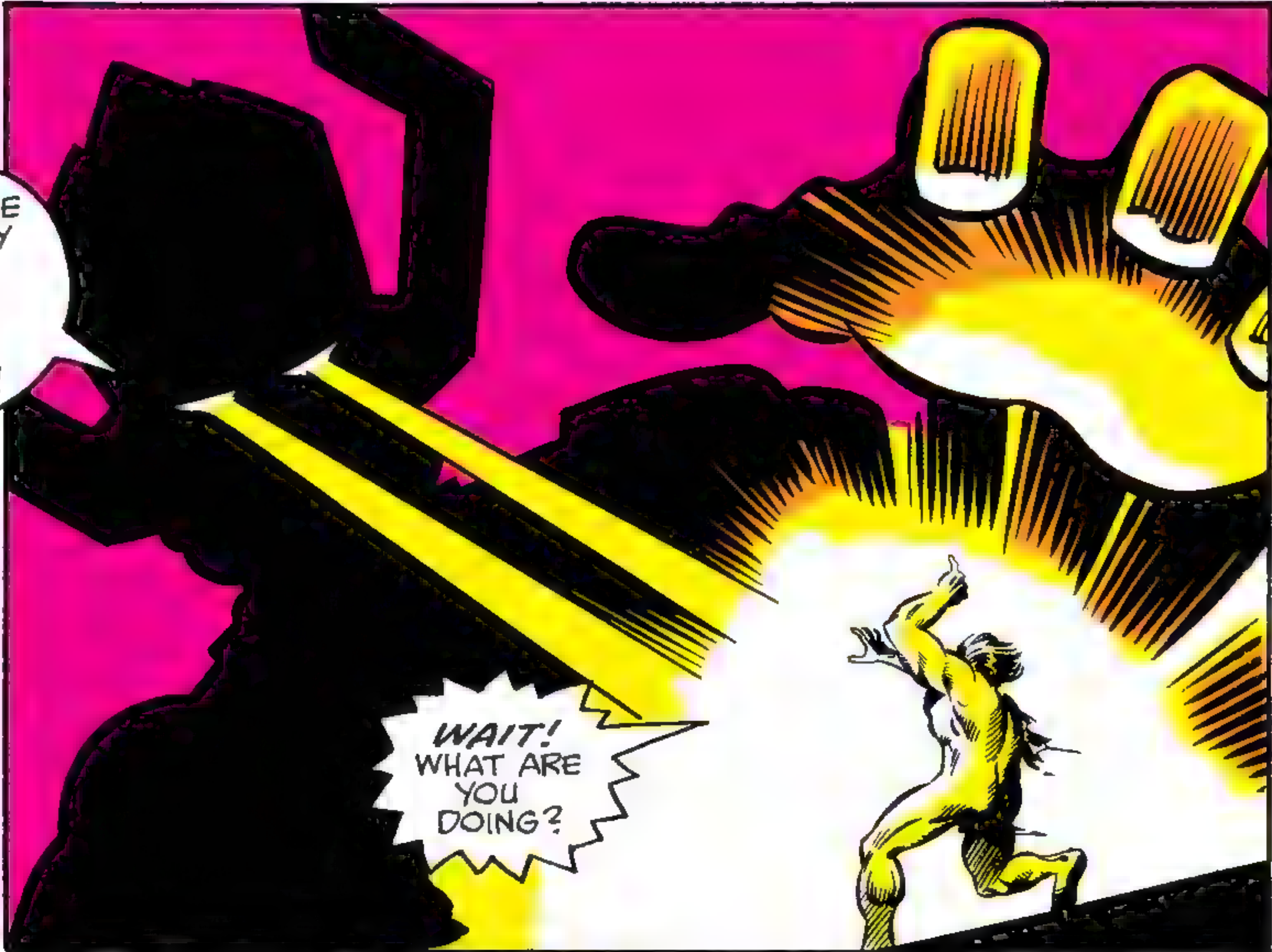




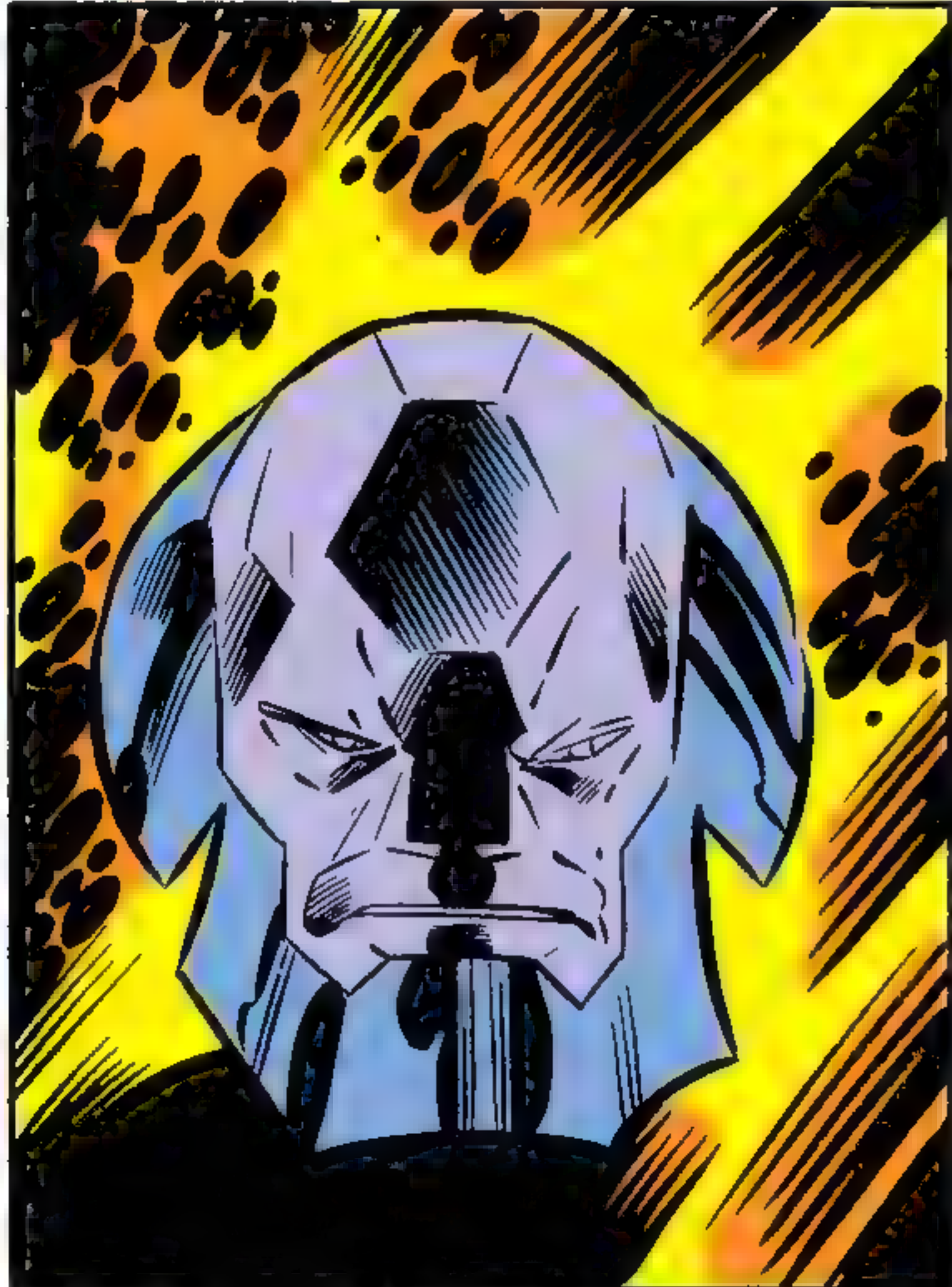




AND SO, THERE
REMAINS ONLY
ONE FINAL
ELEMENT TO
BE GIVEN TO
TYROS TO
COMMAND!

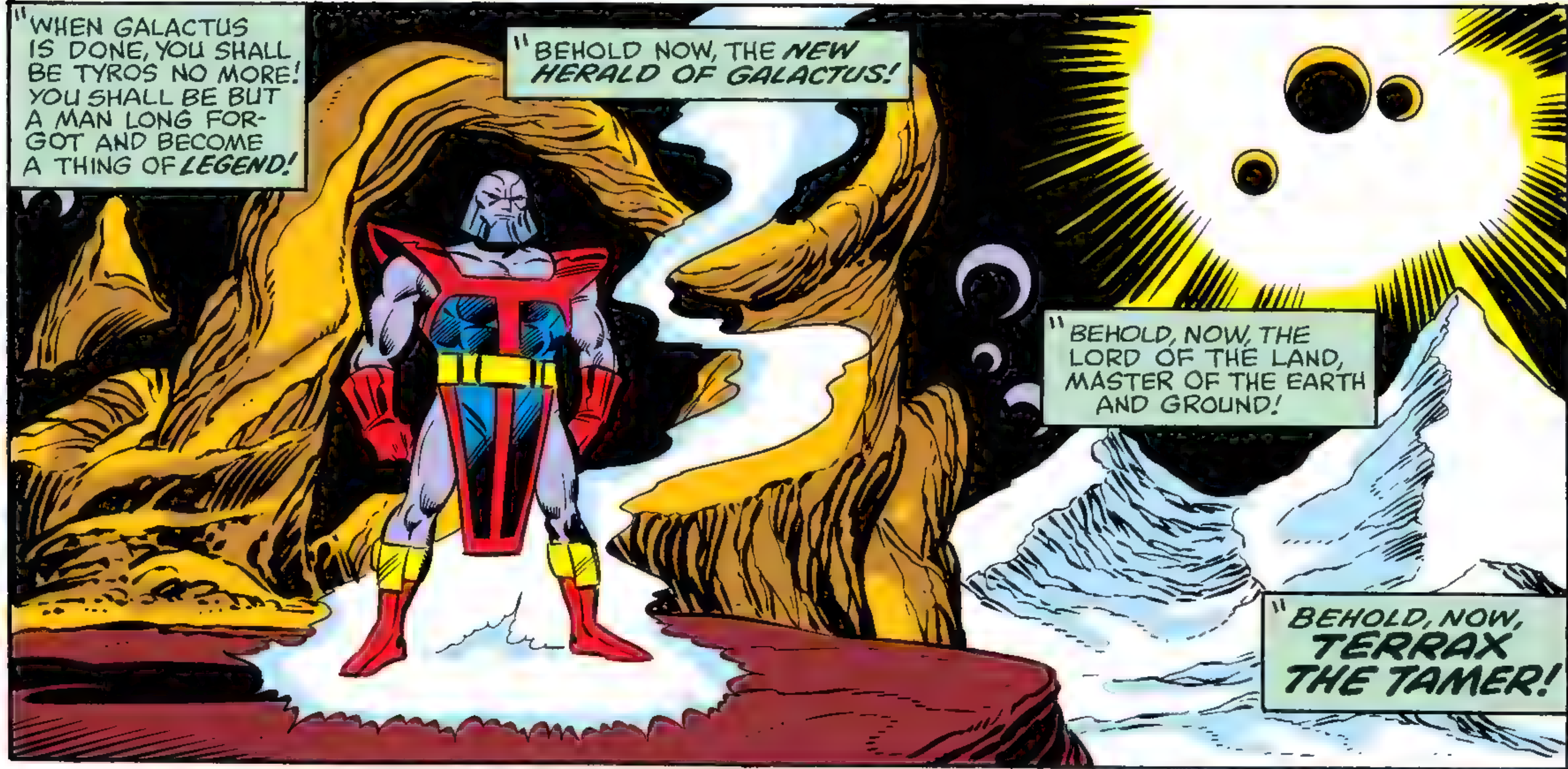


"METAMORPHOSIZING YOU, FOOL! MOLDING YOU INTO A CREATURE WHO CAN SPAN THE ENDLESS CHASMS OF SPACE, WHO CAN GUIDE ME TO THE WORLDS I MUST *CONSUME* IN ORDER TO EXIST!"



"WHEN GALACTUS
IS DONE, YOU SHALL
BE TYROS NO MORE!
YOU SHALL BE BUT
A MAN LONG FOR-
GOT AND BECOME
A THING OF *LEGEND*!"

"BEHOLD NOW, THE *NEW*
HERALD OF GALACTUS!"



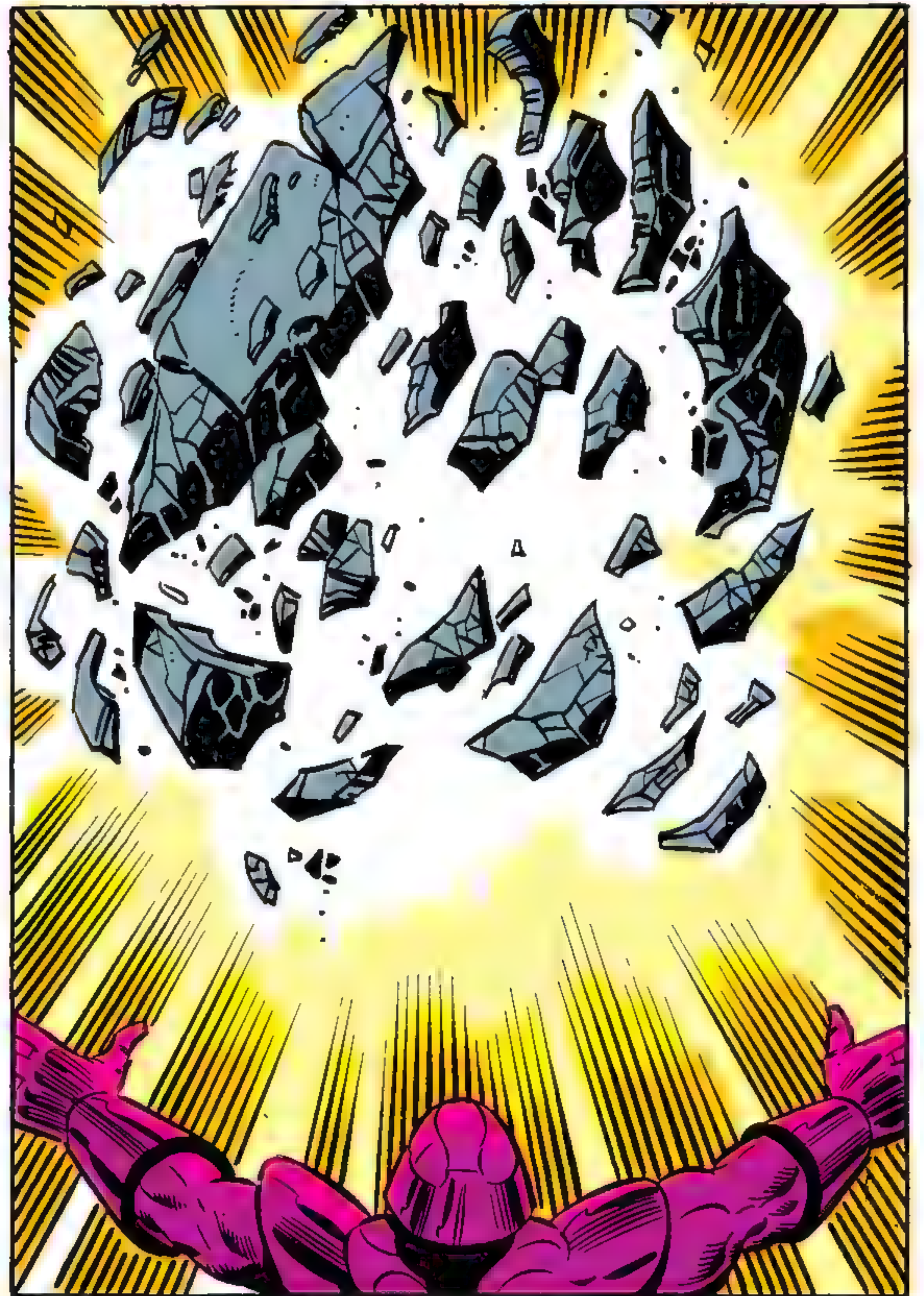
"BEHOLD, NOW, THE
LORD OF THE LAND,
MASTER OF THE EARTH
AND GROUND!"

"BEHOLD, NOW,
TERRAX
THE TAMER!"



"OBSERVE: WITH BUT A WAVE OF HIS TRANSFORMED HAND, TERRAX MAY LIFT AN EARTHEN MOUNTAIN FROM THE BOWELS OF THIS LONG-DEAD WORLD--

"--OR, WITH YET ONE FURTHER WAVE, HE MAY CRUMBLE THAT MOUNT TO SO MUCH ASH AND DUST!

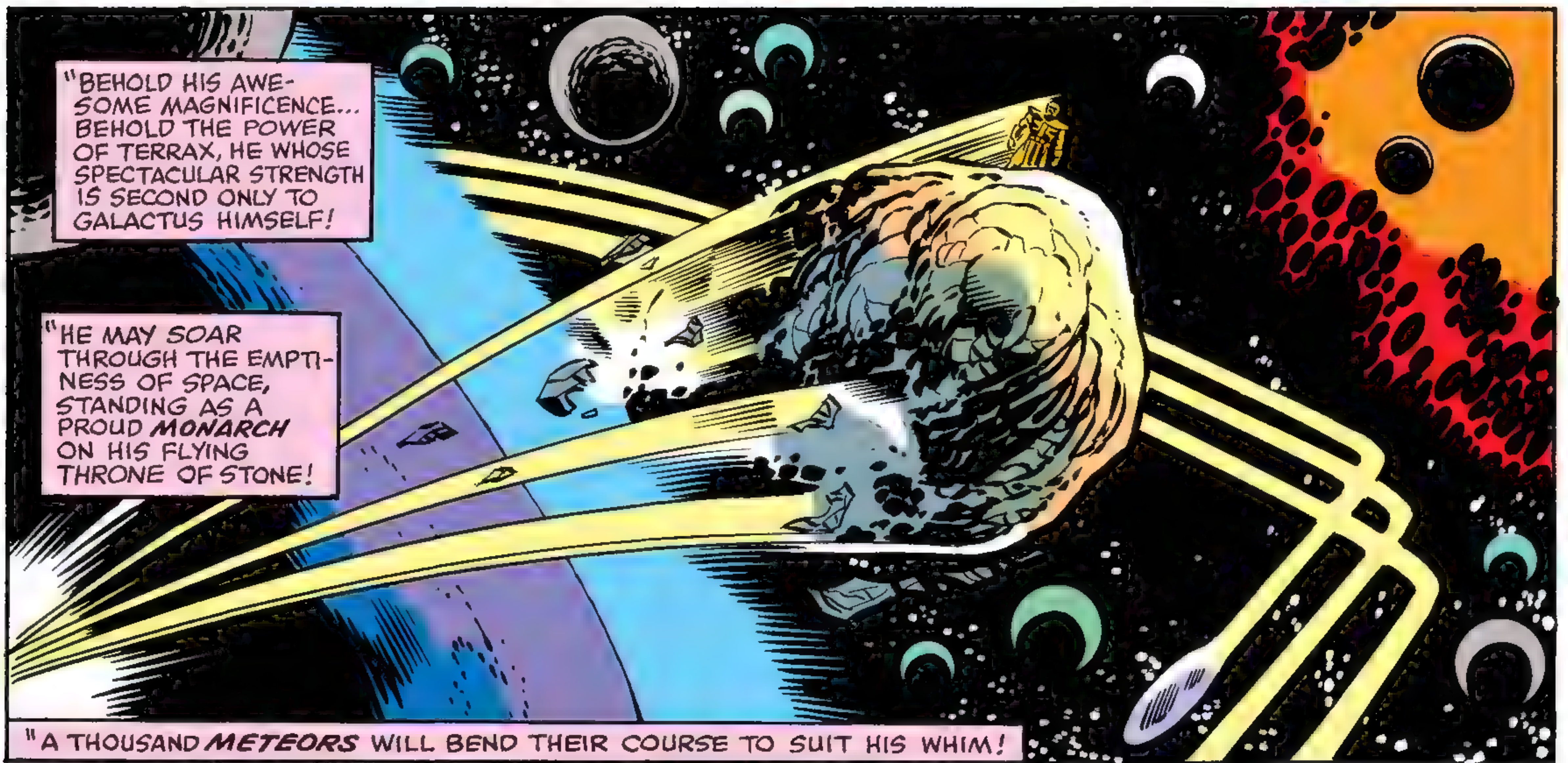


"THE EARTH SHIFTS AND HEAVES AND BOWS TO HIS POWERFUL COMMAND! HE IS MASTER OF THE ROCK AND LOAM, HE IS MOLDER OF THE MOUNTAINS AND THE MARL!



"THAT WHICH IS *TERRA* IS HIS TO COMMAND, AND HIS TO RULE WITH A FIST OF UNSHATTERABLE *STONE*!

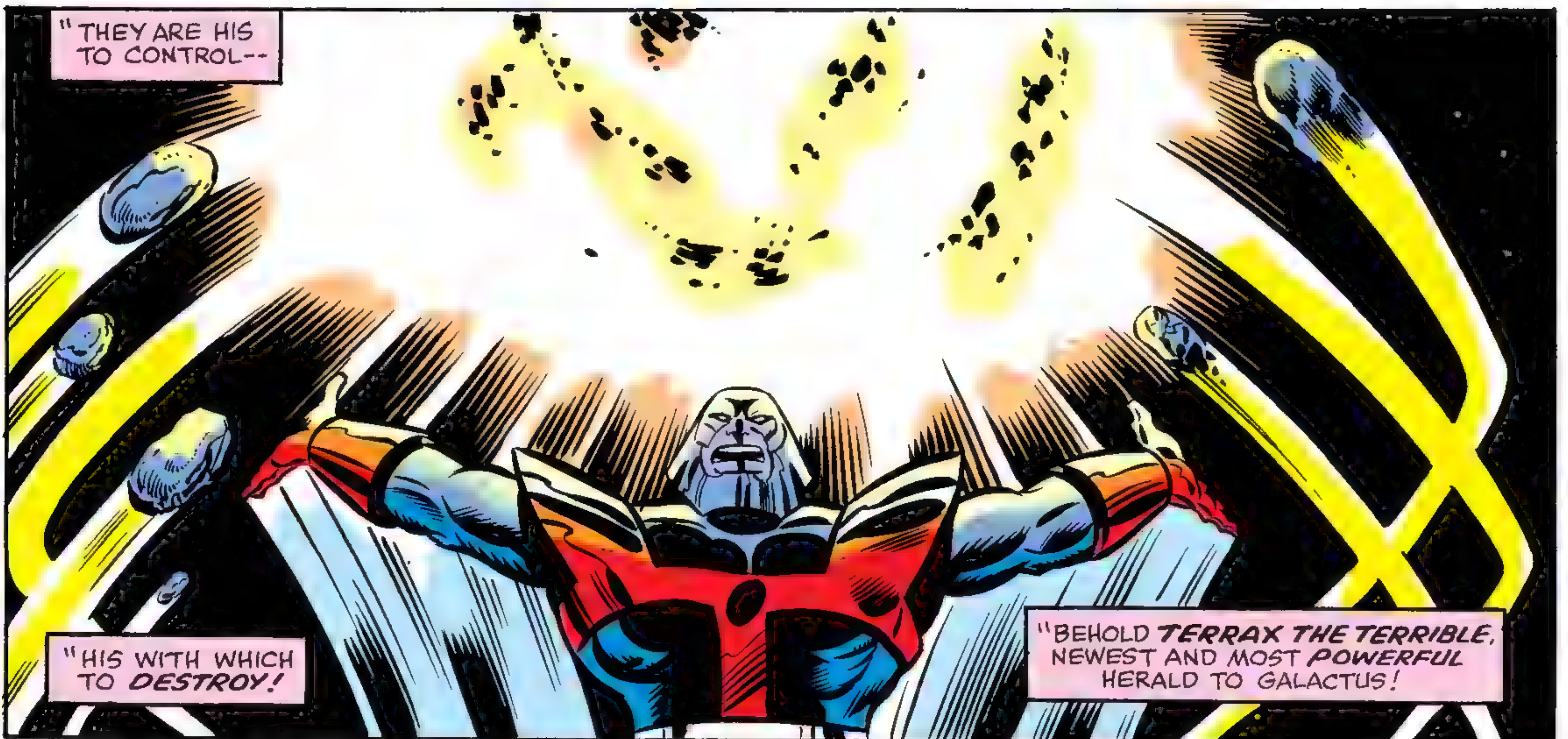




"BEHOLD HIS AWE-SOME MAGNIFICENCE... BEHOLD THE POWER OF TERRAX, HE WHOSE SPECTACULAR STRENGTH IS SECOND ONLY TO GALACTUS HIMSELF!"

"HE MAY SOAR THROUGH THE EMPTINESS OF SPACE, STANDING AS A PROUD **MONARCH** ON HIS FLYING THRONE OF STONE!"

"A THOUSAND **METEORS** WILL BEND THEIR COURSE TO SUIT HIS WHIM!"



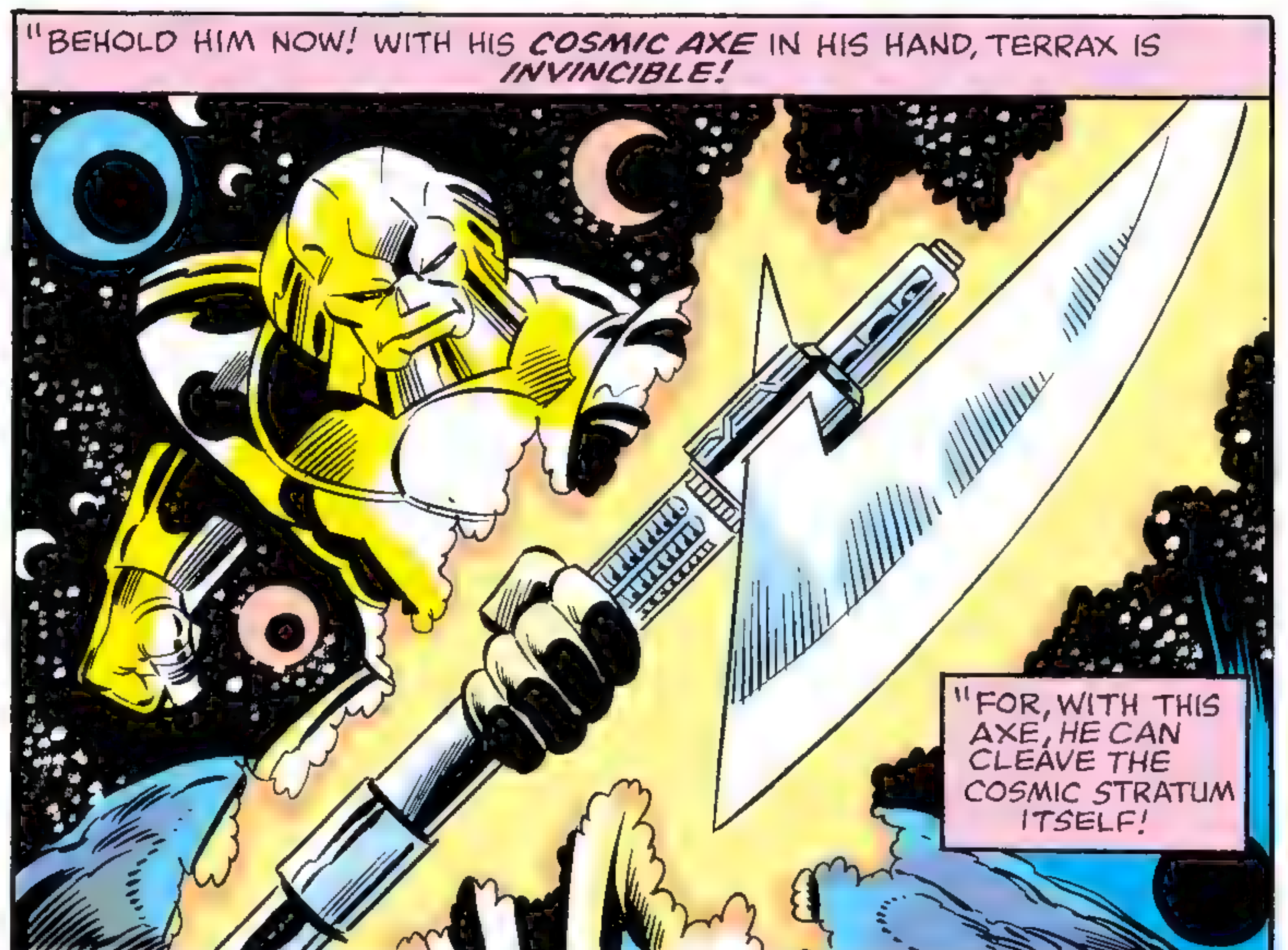
"THEY ARE HIS TO CONTROL--"

"HIS WITH WHICH TO **DESTROY!**"

"BEHOLD **TERRAX THE TERRIBLE**, NEWEST AND MOST **POWERFUL** HERALD TO GALACTUS!"

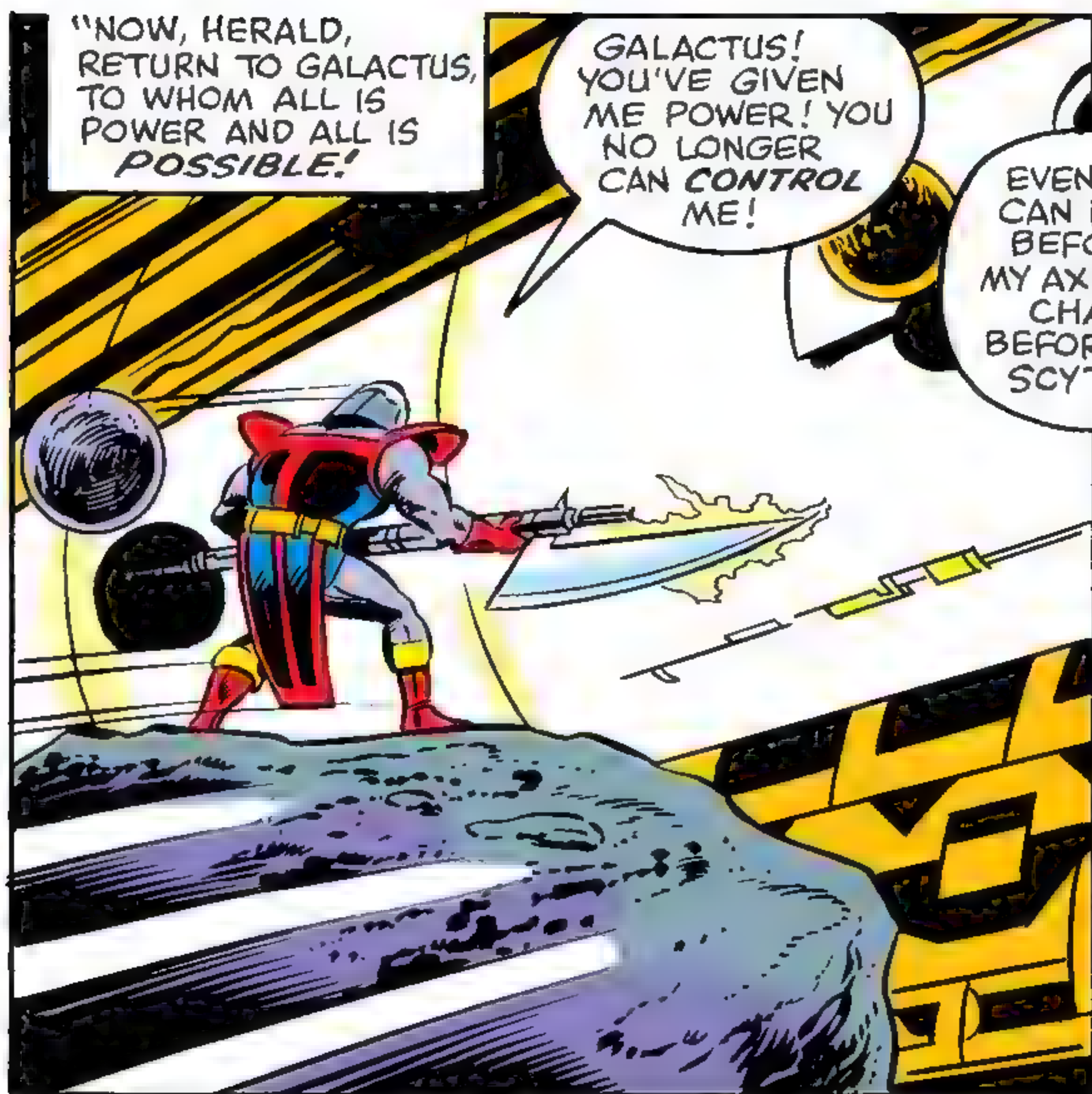


BUT, WAIT! THERE IS ONE DETAIL LEFT TO COMPLETE!



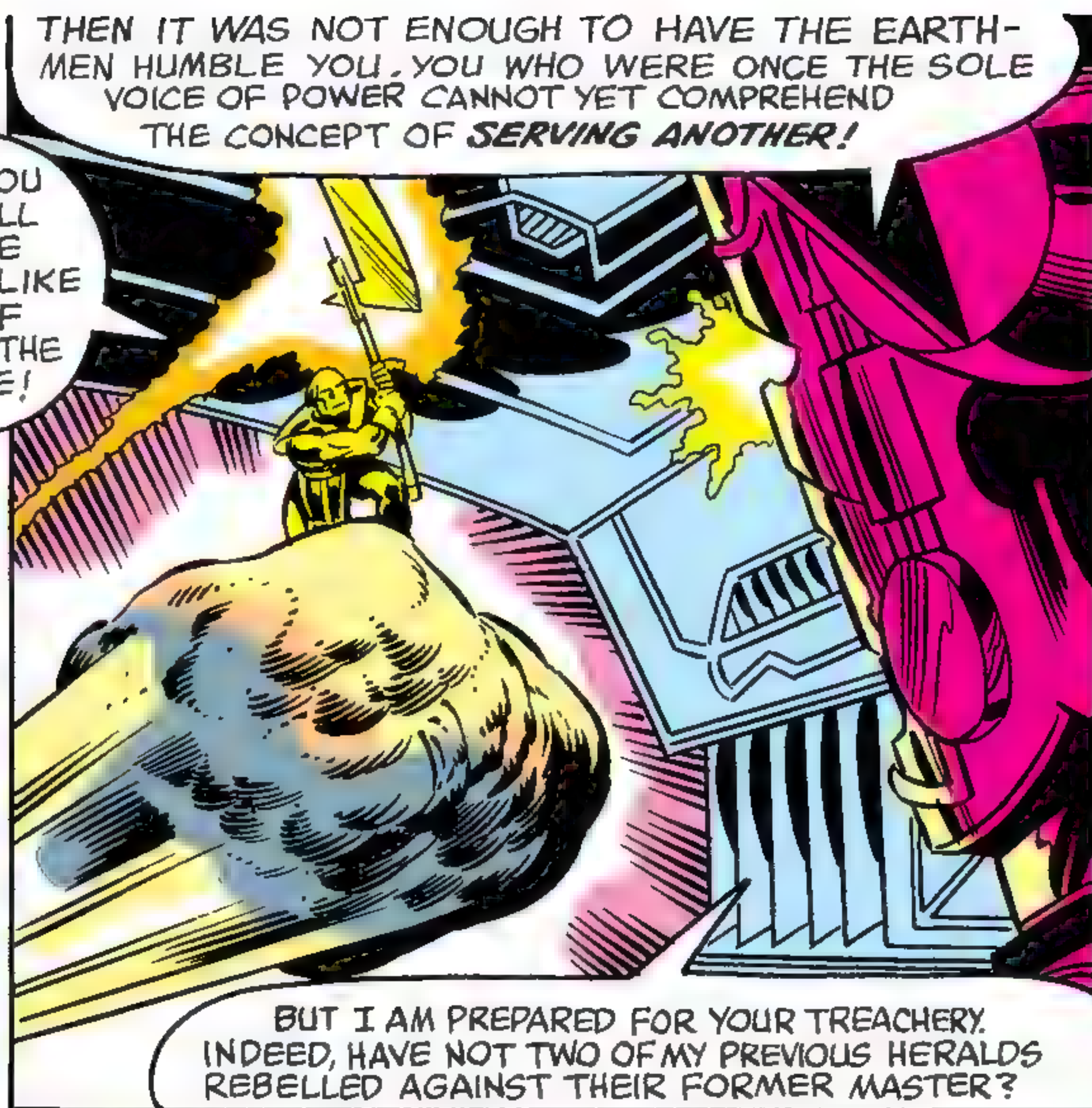
"BEHOLD HIM NOW! WITH HIS **COSMIC AXE** IN HIS HAND, TERRAX IS **INVINCIBLE!**"

"FOR, WITH THIS AXE, HE CAN CLEAVE THE **COSMIC STRATUM** ITSELF!"



GALACTUS!
YOU'VE GIVEN
ME POWER! YOU
NO LONGER
CAN CONTROL
ME!

EVEN YOU
CAN FALL
BEFORE
MY AXE LIKE
CHAFF
BEFORE THE
SCYTHE!



BUT I AM PREPARED FOR YOUR TREACHERY.
INDEED, HAVE NOT TWO OF MY PREVIOUS HERALDS
REBELLED AGAINST THEIR FORMER MASTER?

"BUT, FROM YOU, TERRAX, I SHALL BROOK
NO REVOLT. YOU MAY HAVE THE POWER
COSMIC FLOWING THROUGH YOUR VEINS--



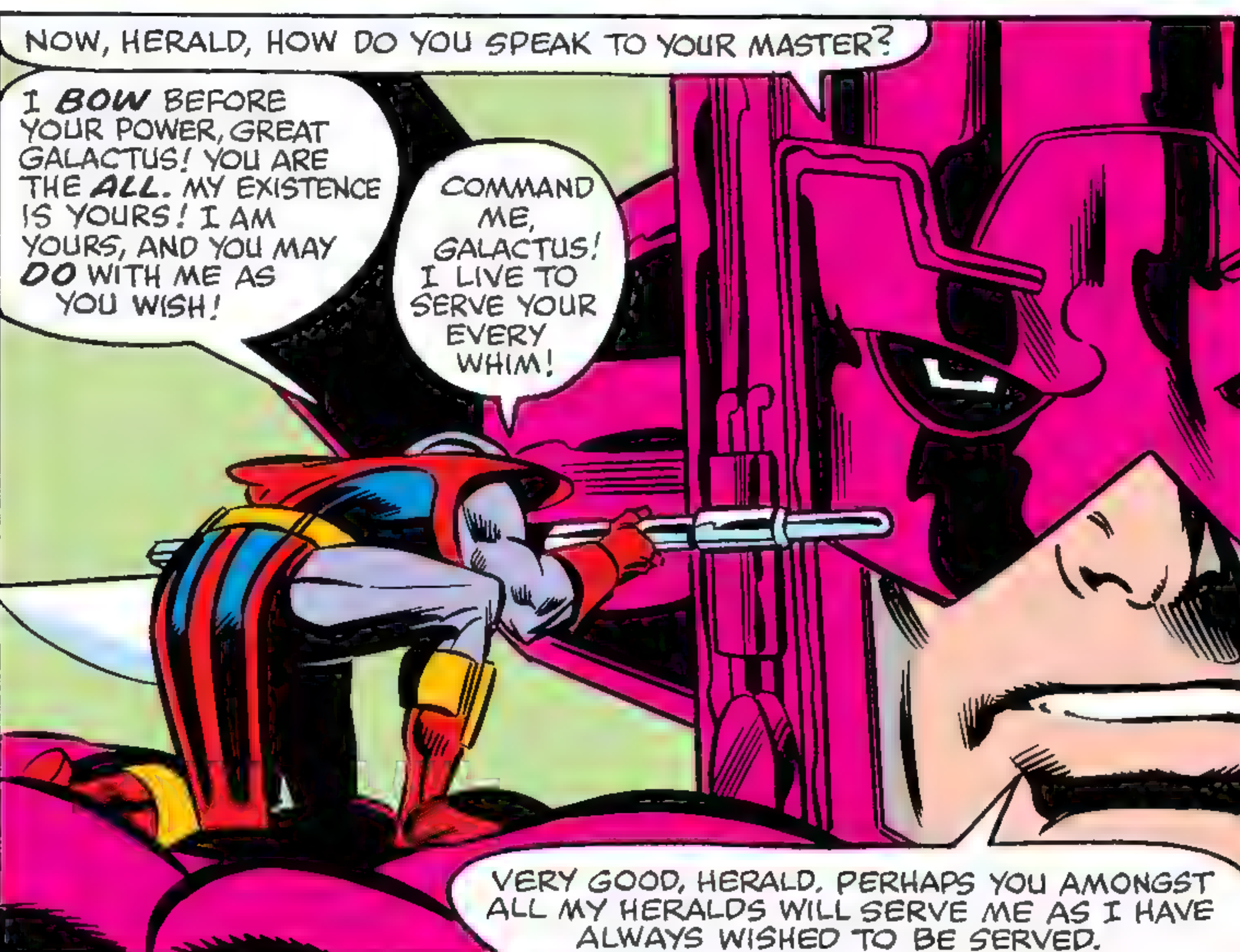
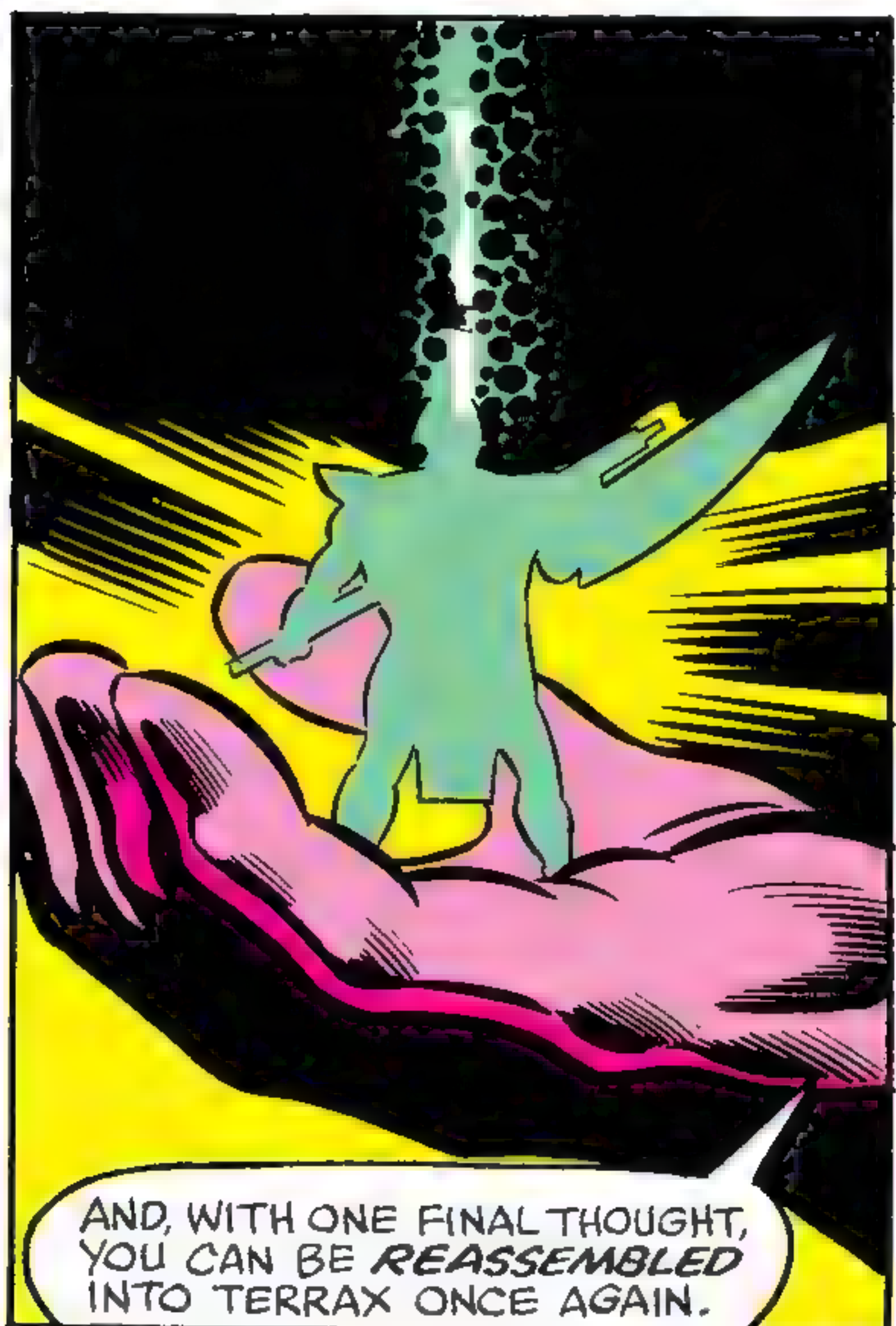
"--BUT GALACTUS IS *STILL YOUR MASTER!* GALACTUS WHO HAS GRANTED YOU POWER CAN JUST AS EASILY REMOVE IT!



"YOU ARE TERRAX, BUT, WITH LITTLE MORE THAN A BLINK OF AN EYE, YOU CAN BE A LOWLY, CRAWLING INSECT--



--OR, YOU CAN BE DISSOLVED INTO NOTHING MORE THAN *ENERGY* TO BE DISPERSED THROUGHOUT THIS EXPANDING COSMOS!

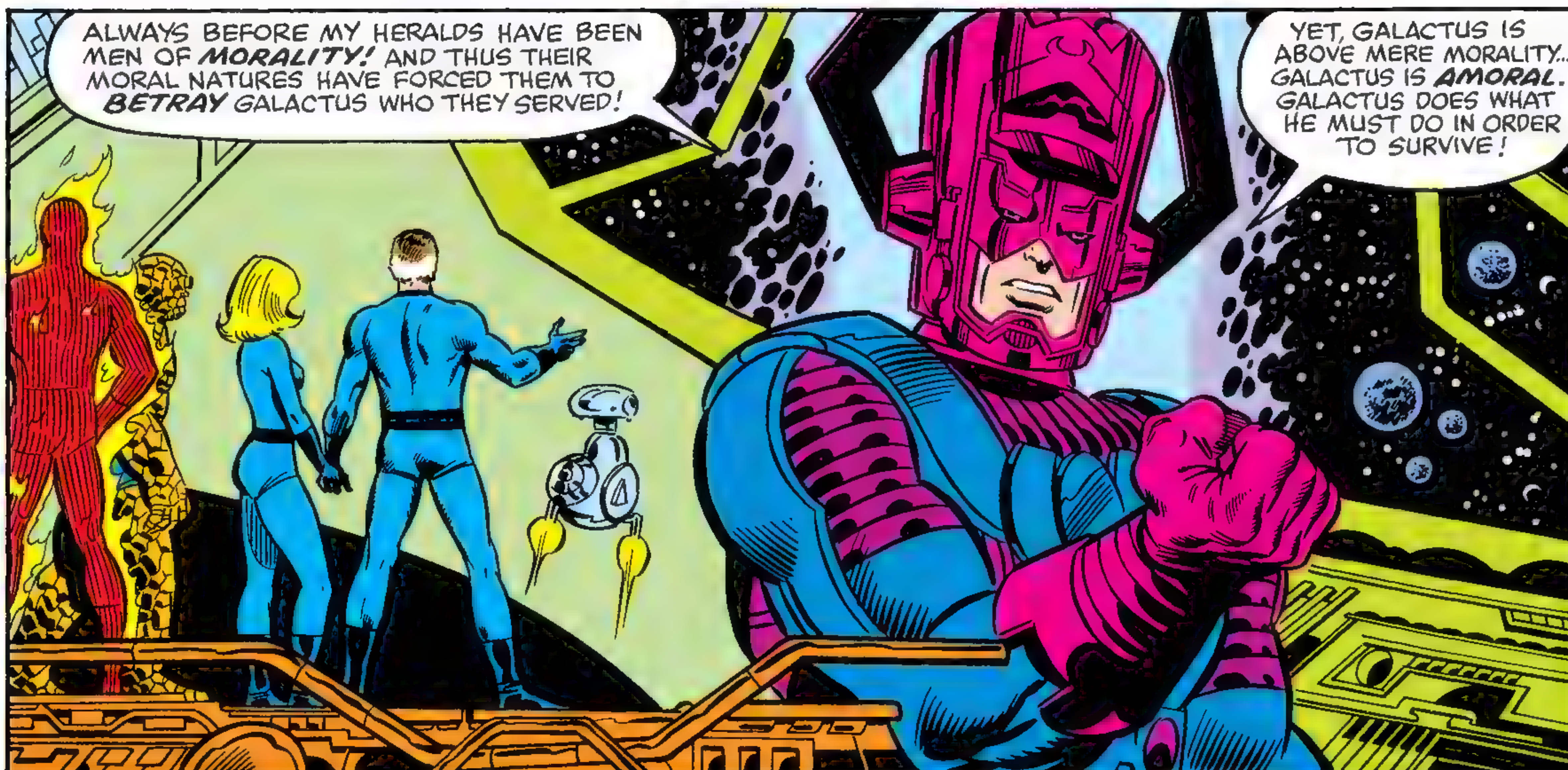


I *BOW* BEFORE
YOUR POWER, GREAT
GALACTUS! YOU ARE
THE *ALL*. MY EXISTENCE
IS YOURS! I AM
YOURS, AND YOU MAY
DO WITH ME AS
YOU WISH!

COMMAND
ME,
GALACTUS!
I LIVE TO
SERVE YOUR
EVERY
WHIM!

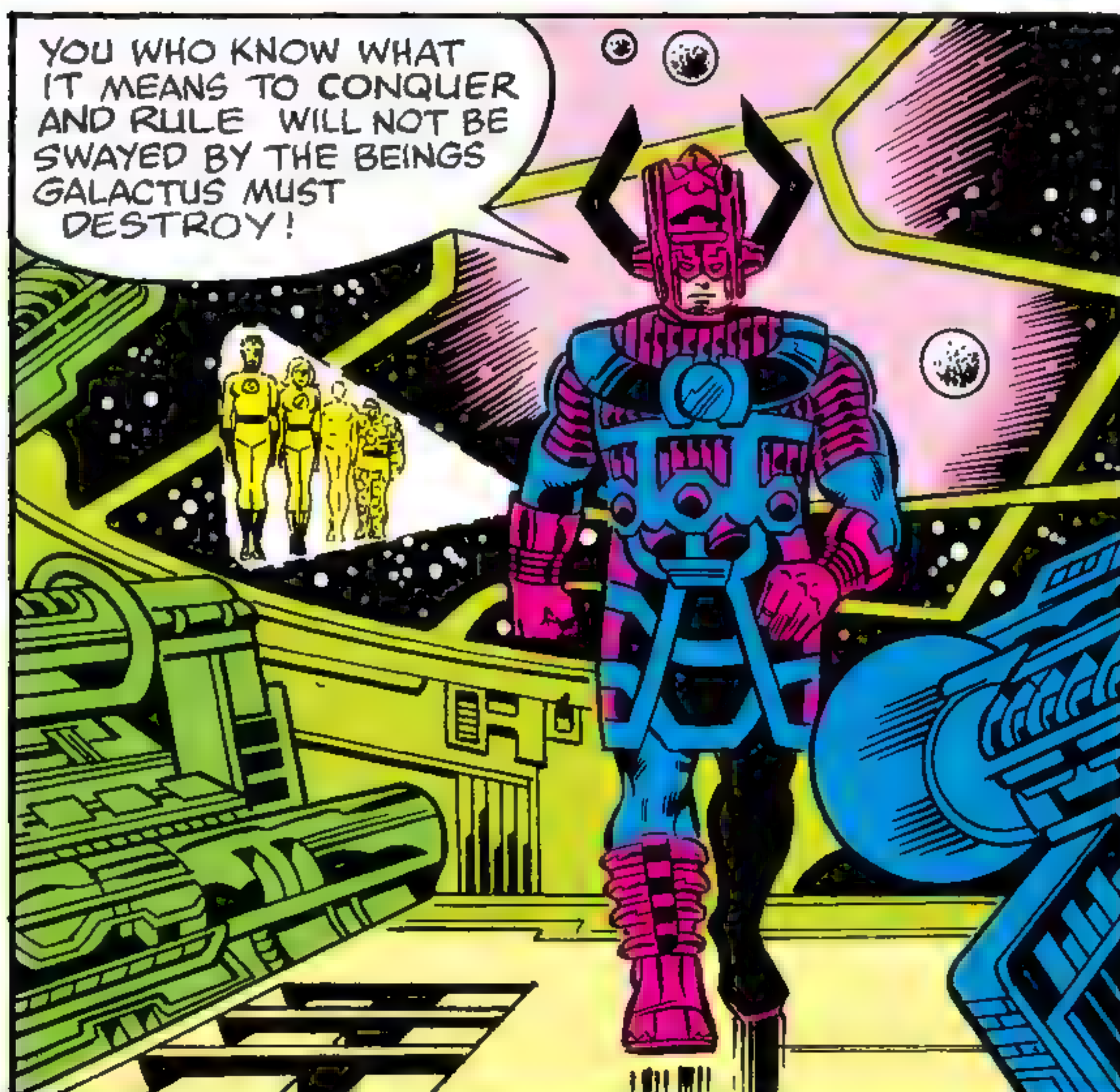
AND, WITH ONE FINAL THOUGHT,
YOU CAN BE *REASSEMBLED*
INTO TERRAX ONCE AGAIN.

VERY GOOD, HERALD. PERHAPS YOU AMONGST
ALL MY HERALDS WILL SERVE ME AS I HAVE
ALWAYS WISHED TO BE SERVED.



ALWAYS BEFORE MY HERALDS HAVE BEEN MEN OF *MORALITY*! AND THUS THEIR MORAL NATURES HAVE FORCED THEM TO *BETRAY* GALACTUS WHO THEY SERVED!

YET, GALACTUS IS ABOVE MERE MORALITY... GALACTUS IS *AMORAL*. GALACTUS DOES WHAT HE MUST DO IN ORDER TO SURVIVE!

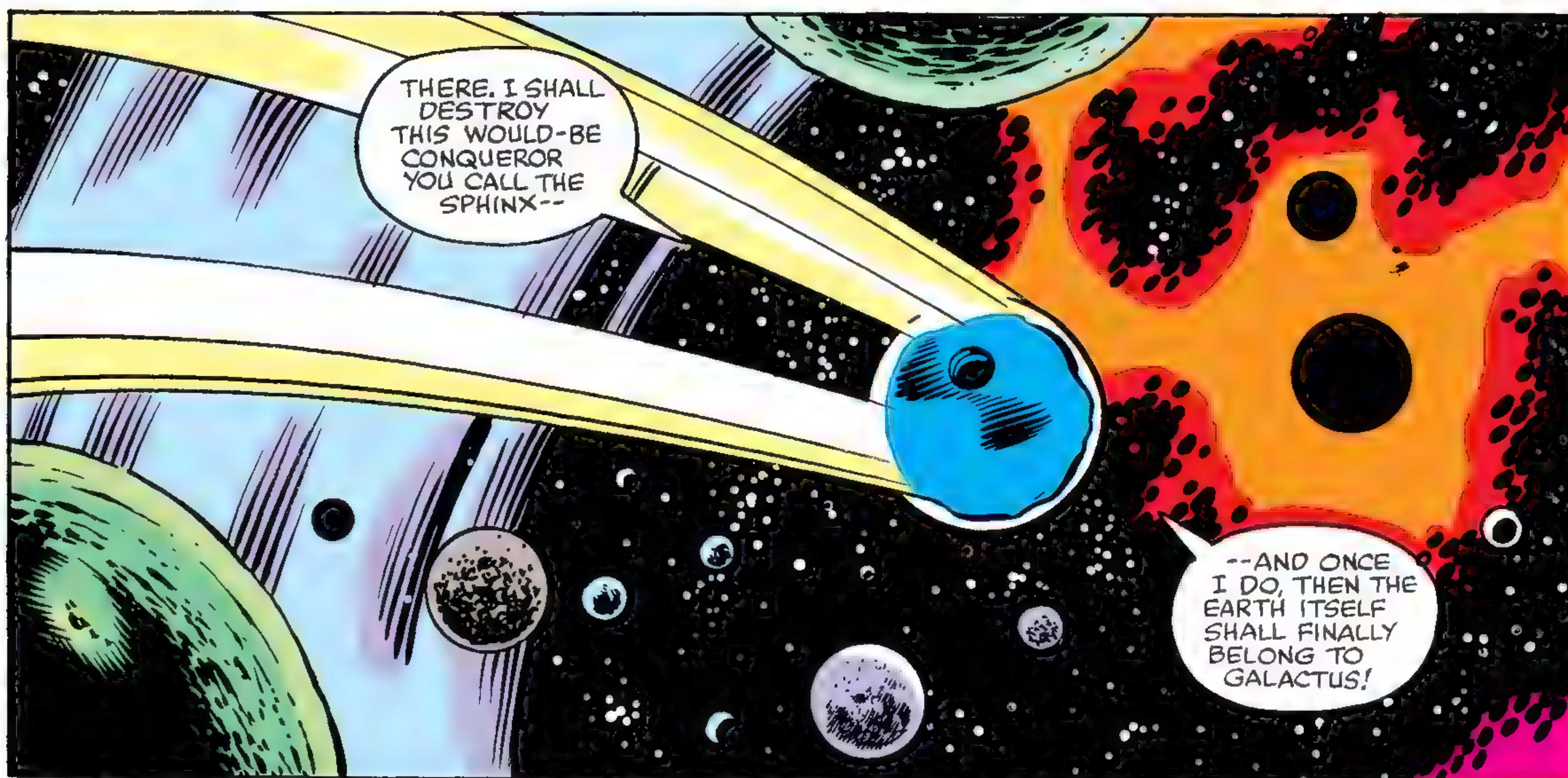


YOU WHO KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO CONQUER AND RULE WILL NOT BE SWAYED BY THE BEINGS GALACTUS MUST DESTROY!



AND NOW, HUMANS, COME WITH ME. YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR PART OF THE BARGAIN, AND GALACTUS CAN NOT DO LESS THAN COMPLETE HIS!

WE SHALL HURRY TO YOUR EARTH WHICH HAS BEEN THE ONLY WORLD TO HAVE EVER ESCAPED MY VORACIOUS HUNGER!



THERE, I SHALL DESTROY THIS WOULD-BE CONQUEROR YOU CALL THE SPHINX--

--AND ONCE I DO, THEN THE EARTH ITSELF SHALL FINALLY BELONG TO GALACTUS!

EPILOGUE:

ON THE MOON, OVERLOOKING THE GREAT LOOMING BALL KNOWN AS EARTH, A SOLITARY FIGURE STANDS SILENT AND OBSERVES...

IT IS ALMOST *TIME* NOW. THE SPHINX HAS MADE HIS BASE UPON THE EARTH...AND THE GREAT GALACTUS COMES *SPEEDING* TO DO BATTLE WITH HIM.

ALL THAT I HAVE AWAITED THESE PAST WEEKS NOW FINALLY COMES TO *FRUITION!* AND THAT WHICH WILL TRANSPIRE SHALL BE WRITTEN IN THE ANNALS OF ALL THAT WILL COME.

THERE SHALL COME THE GREATEST COSMIC BATTLE EVER TO BE WITNESSED BY MAN. GOD AGAINST GOD AND THE EARTH'S SLENDER FATE TEETERS IN THE BALANCE.

ALL THIS SHALL HAPPEN, AND ALL THIS SHALL I OBSERVE WITHOUT ACTION. AND YET, THERE WILL BE *SORROW* WHEN THE BATTLE IS DONE...

FOR EARTH, FAIR TERRA, ABOVE ALL THE OTHER WORLDS I HAVE WATCHED BE BORN AND DIE, ONLY EARTH HAS TRULY *INTRIGUED* ME.

TRULY, I SHALL *MOURN* ITS PASSING!

NEXT ISSUE: **THE BATTLE BETWEEN TITANS!**

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FANTASTIC FOUR

DOOMED BY THE SKRULL'S AGING RAY, THE
FANTASTIC FOUR ARE HELPLESS TO PREVENT
THE **CLASH** OF THE TITANS!

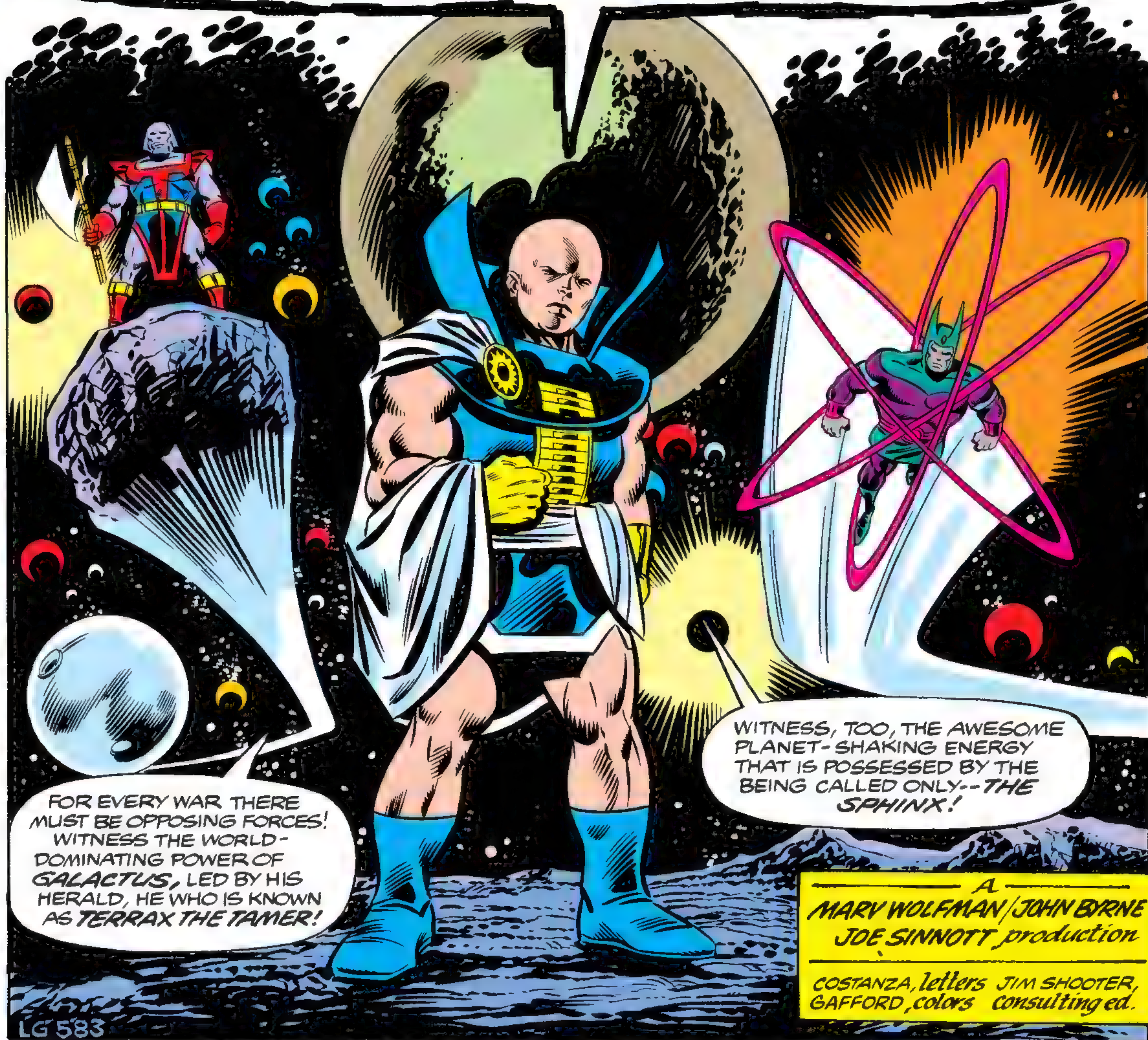


Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**®

I AM CALLED--*THE WATCHER!* IT HAS BEEN MY RACE'S TASK TO *OBSERVE* THE LIVES OF ALL CREATURES WHO DWELL WITHIN OUR EXPANDING UNIVERSE. THUS, HEAR ME NOW, CITIZENS OF EARTH-- TONIGHT YOUR TROUBLED WORLD SHALL BECOME A WAR-TORN BACKDROP TO AN ALREADY PRE-DESTINED STRUGGLE!

THE BATTLE OF THE TITANS!



FOR EVERY WAR THERE MUST BE OPPOSING FORCES! WITNESS THE WORLD-DOMINATING POWER OF *GALACTUS*, LED BY HIS HERALD, HE WHO IS KNOWN AS *TERRAX THE TAMER!*

WITNESS, TOO, THE AWESOME PLANET-SHAKING ENERGY THAT IS POSSESSED BY THE BEING CALLED ONLY--*THE SPHINX!*

A
MARV WOLFGMAN/JOHN BYRNE
JOE SINNOTT production

COSTANZA, letters JIM SHOOTER,
GAFFORD, colors consulting ed.

LONG AGO IT WAS *PREDESTINED* THAT THESE THREE MIGHTY BEINGS BE DRAWN INTO CONFLICT, WHILE I, WHO CAN DO NO MORE THAN OBSERVE, MUST SIMPLY NOTE ALL THAT TRANSPIRES IN MY COSMIC LOG OF KNOWLEDGE!

TO FULLY COMPREHEND ALL THAT SHALL OCCUR, ONE MUST FIRST LEARN WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED...



FOR EARTH, THIS BATTLE BEGAN IN THE RECESSES OF THE BAXTER BUILDING WHERE SCIENTIST REED RICHARDS STRUGGLED TO LEARN THE ORIGIN OF A STRANGE *ION RAY*.

WHAT IN THE WORLD? A GIRL-- APPEARING IN MY BEAM!

<PLEASE! HELP ME BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!>

"A MOMENT MORE, AND THE REASON FOR THE GIRL'S CONSTERNATION BECAME QUITE EVIDENT."

IT'S A *SKRULL CREEPO*! HE'S AFTER THAT SPACE GAL!

WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM, BEN!

WHADDA YA THINK I'M DOIN' DANCIN' WITH MORK FROM ORK?

"WITH THIS STRANGE SKRULL DEFEATED, THE ALIEN GIRL, PRINCESS ADORA, SUZERAIN OF THE PLANET XANDAR, CONVINCED THE FANTASTIC FOUR TO AID IN HER PLANET'S WAR AGAINST THE SKRULLS."

"THE THREE VALIANT TEAM MEMBERS WHO JOINED HER SOON FOUND THEMSELVES CAPTURED BY THE SAVAGE SKRULLS AND FORCED TO PARTAKE IN A TRIAL WHICH MOCKED TRUE JUSTICE."

YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF CONSPIRING AGAINST THE SKRULL EMPIRE!

YOUR PUNISHMENT SHALL BE DEATH BY RAPID AGING!

IN THREE OF YOUR EARTH DAYS, YOU SHALL PERISH OF OLD AGE!

"WITH THE AID OF ANOTHER SUPER HERO GROUP KNOWN AS THE *NEW CHAMPIONS*, THE FANTASTIC FOUR ESCAPED THE SKRULL HOMELAND AND RETURNED TO XANDAR ONLY TO FIND THEIR FOURTH MEMBER WAITING FOR THEM..."

JOHNNY! YOU MADE IT!

YEAH, SIS, IT WAS GETTING A BIT *LOVELY* HANGING AROUND THE BAXTER BUILDING.

"BUT THE JOY OF REUNION COULD NOT LIGHTEN THE TRAGEDY THAT WAS SOON TO BEFALL THEM ALL!"

"FROM ABOARD THE CHAMPIONS' STARSHIP CAME THE *SPHINX*, WHOSE SOLE DESIRE WAS TO TAP THE POWER OF XANDAR'S LEGENDARY LIVING COMPUTERS!"

"AND WITH THE TERRIBLE KNOWLEDGE HE GAINED, HE SUMMONED TO HIMSELF THE POWERS OF THE UNIVERSE!"

"DRIVEN MAD WITH SUCH POWER, THE SPHINX DECIDED ON A DEADLY ACTION: HE WOULD RETURN TO THE PLANET OF HIS BIRTH-- AND THEN HE WOULD DESTROY IT!"

"THEIR POWER DIMINISHED BY THEIR EVER-INCREASING AGING, THE FANTASTIC FOUR KNEW THERE WAS ONLY ONE BEING CAPABLE OF ENGAGING THE SINISTER SPHINX IN BATTLE:"

"*GALACTUS, DEVOURER OF WORLDS!*"

HELP US DEFEAT THE SPHINX AND I'LL RELINQUISH THE VOW I MADE YOU TAKE NEVER TO ATTACK THE EARTH ANEW!

"THE EARTHLING'S SHOCKING REQUEST STARTLED EVEN ME, YET ONCE I PIERCED HIS UNCONSCIOUS MIND I UNDERSTOOD HIS PLAN OF ACTION."

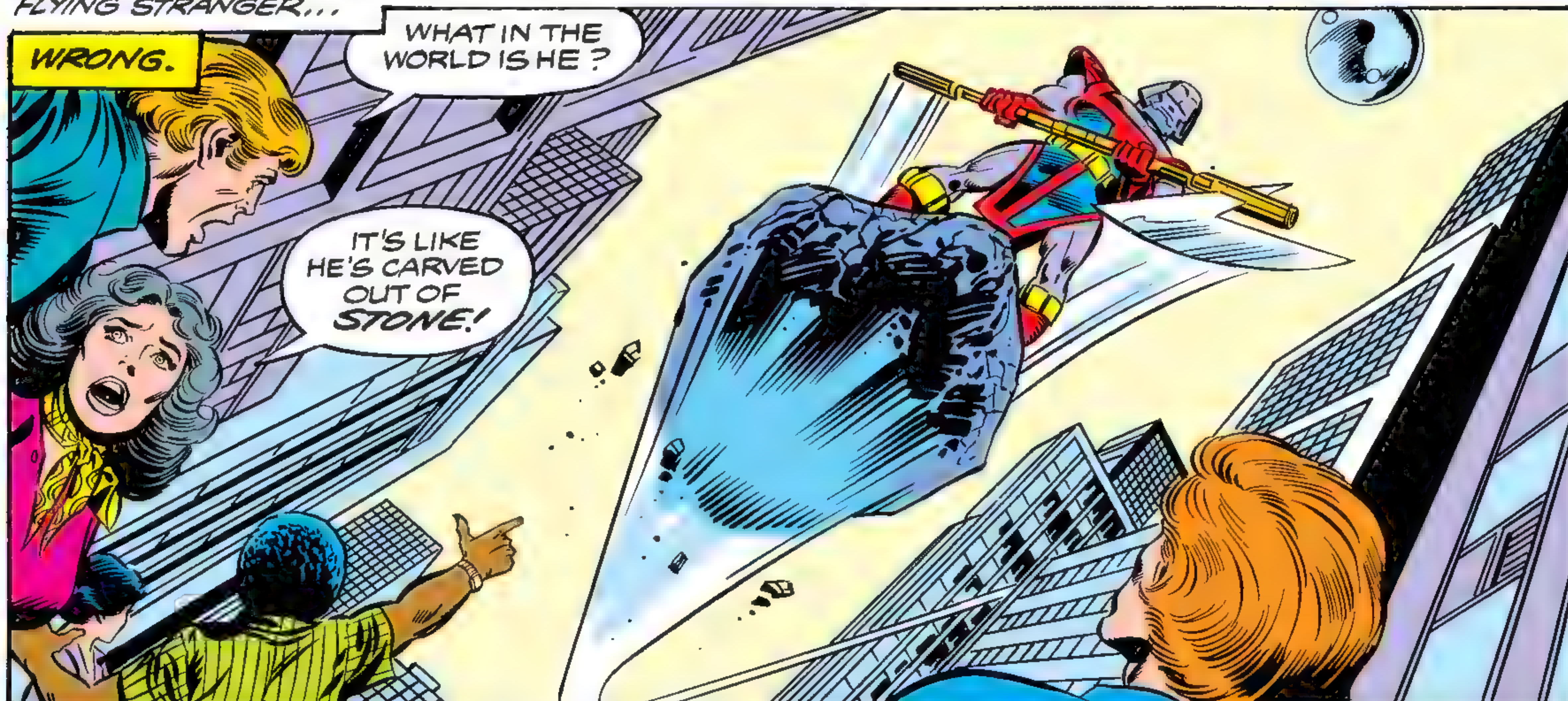
AND SO, NOW THE EARTH STANDS *DEFENSELESS* AGAINST TWIN MENACES--

WILL IT SURVIVE? WILL IT PERISH AS COUNTLESS WORLDS HAVE PERISHED BEFORE? THAT I DO NOT NOW KNOW...

LIKE YOU, I MUST SIMPLY WAIT AND OBSERVE THE EVENTS AS THEY OCCUR.

FOR, AM I NOT-- *THE WATCHER*?

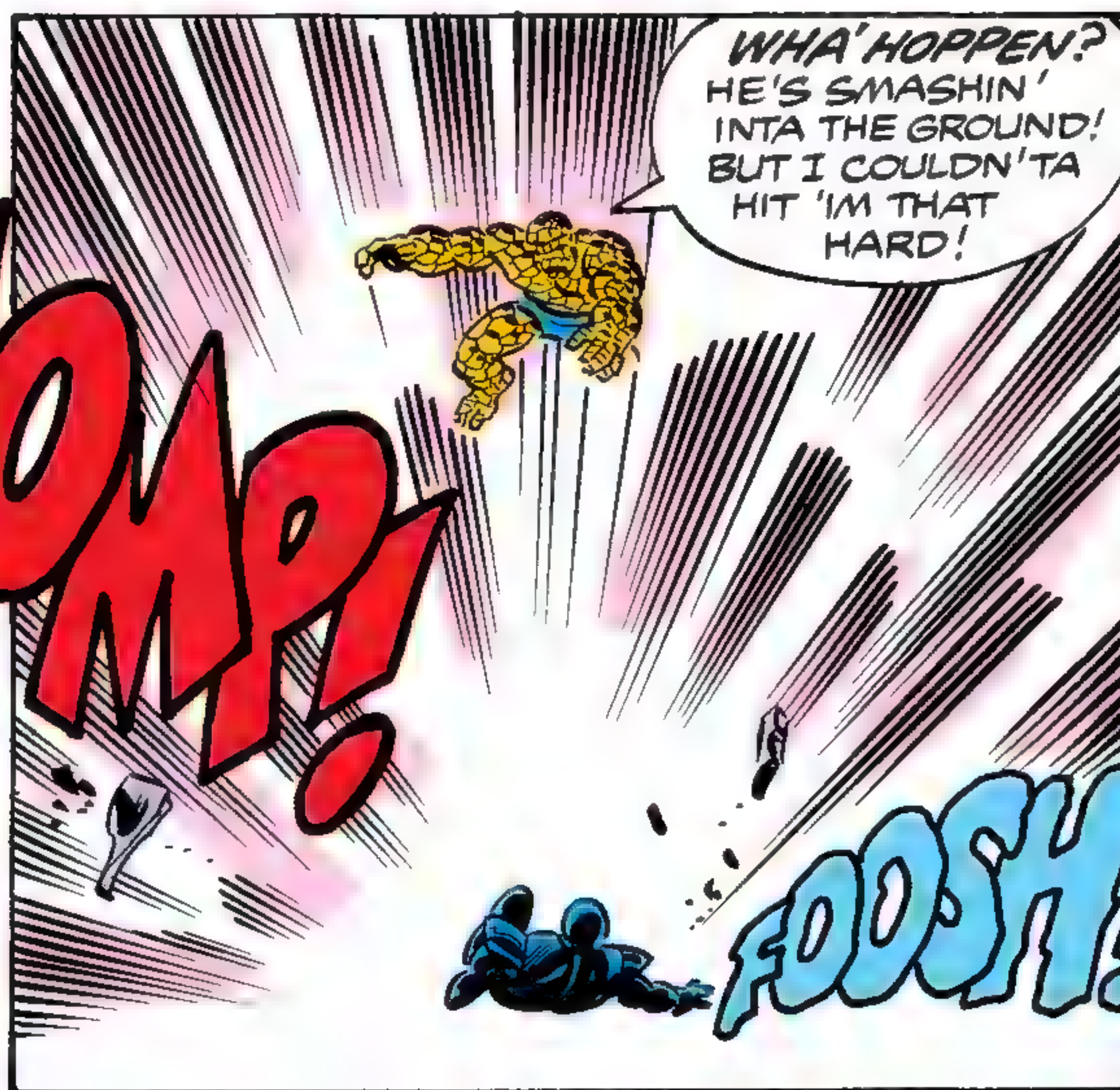
NEW YORK IS HOME CITY TO A PLETHORA OF SUPER HEROES. THUS, IT COULD BE ASSUMED THE BIG APPLE'S JADED POPULACE WOULD BE INURED TO THE DRAMATIC PRESENCE OF ONE MORE FLYING STRANGER...



WITH HIS COSMIC AX GRIPPED FIRMLY IN A MIGHTY HAND, TERRAX WHIRLS IT ABOVE HIS STONEY HEAD...

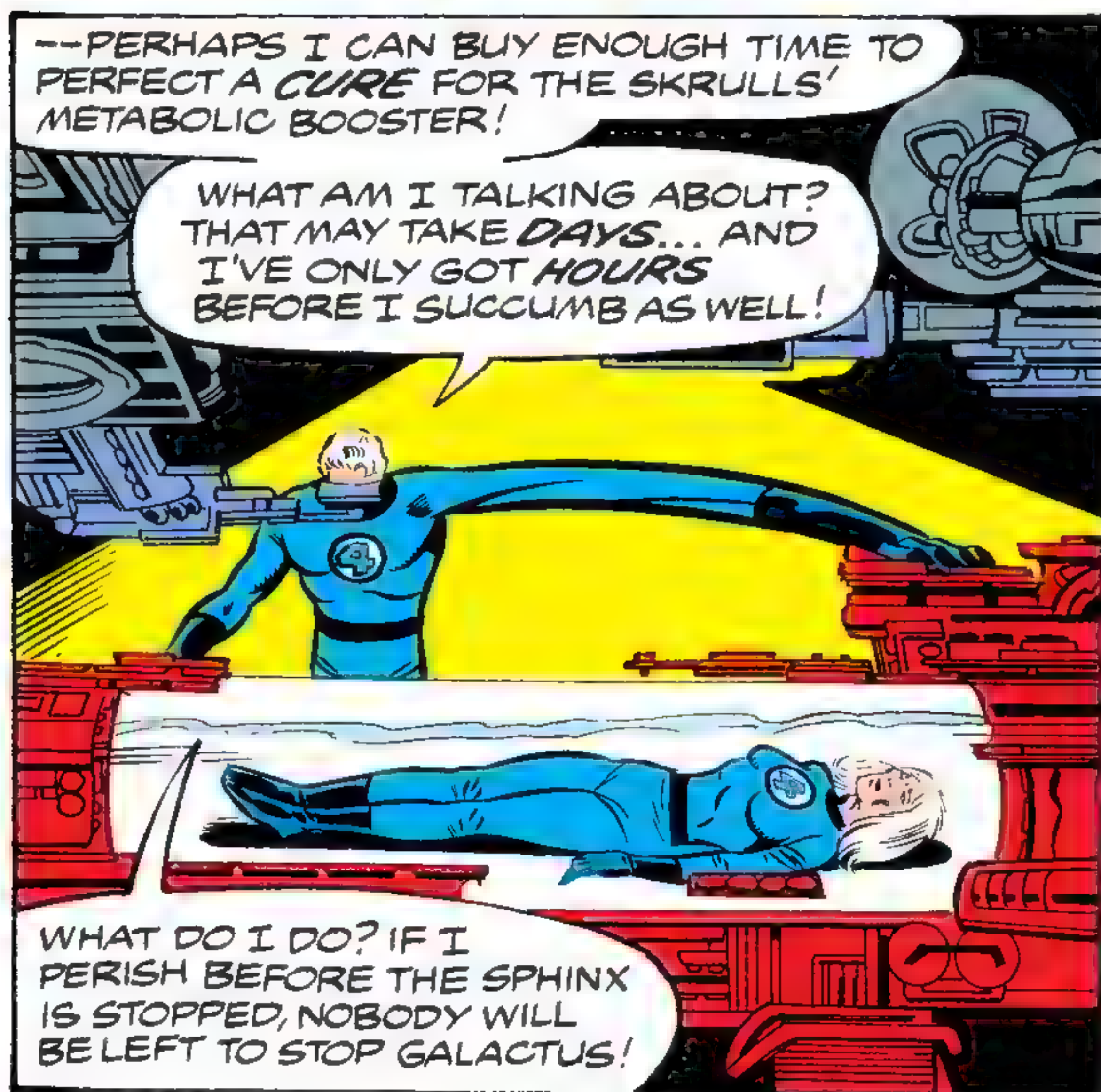
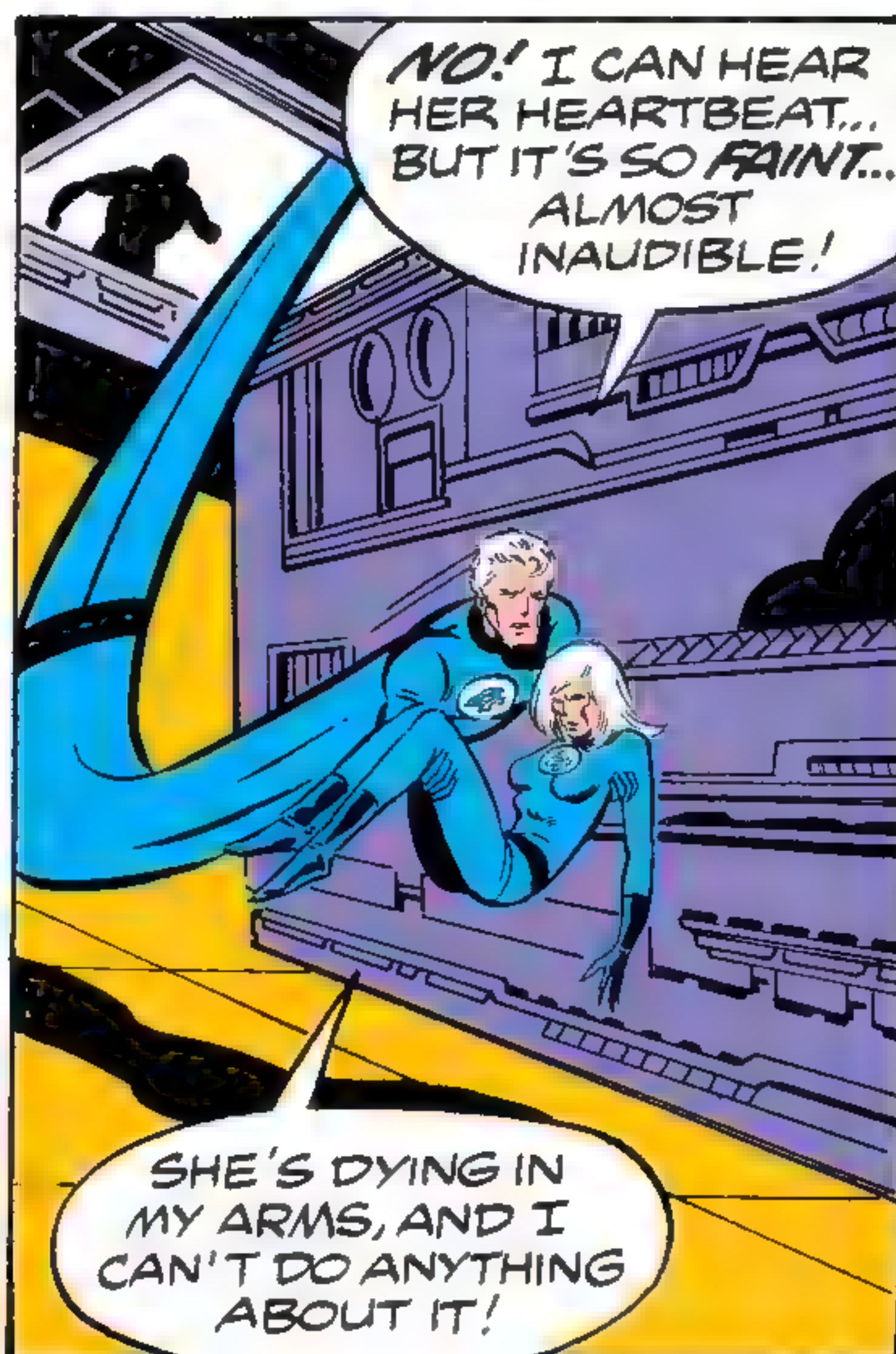
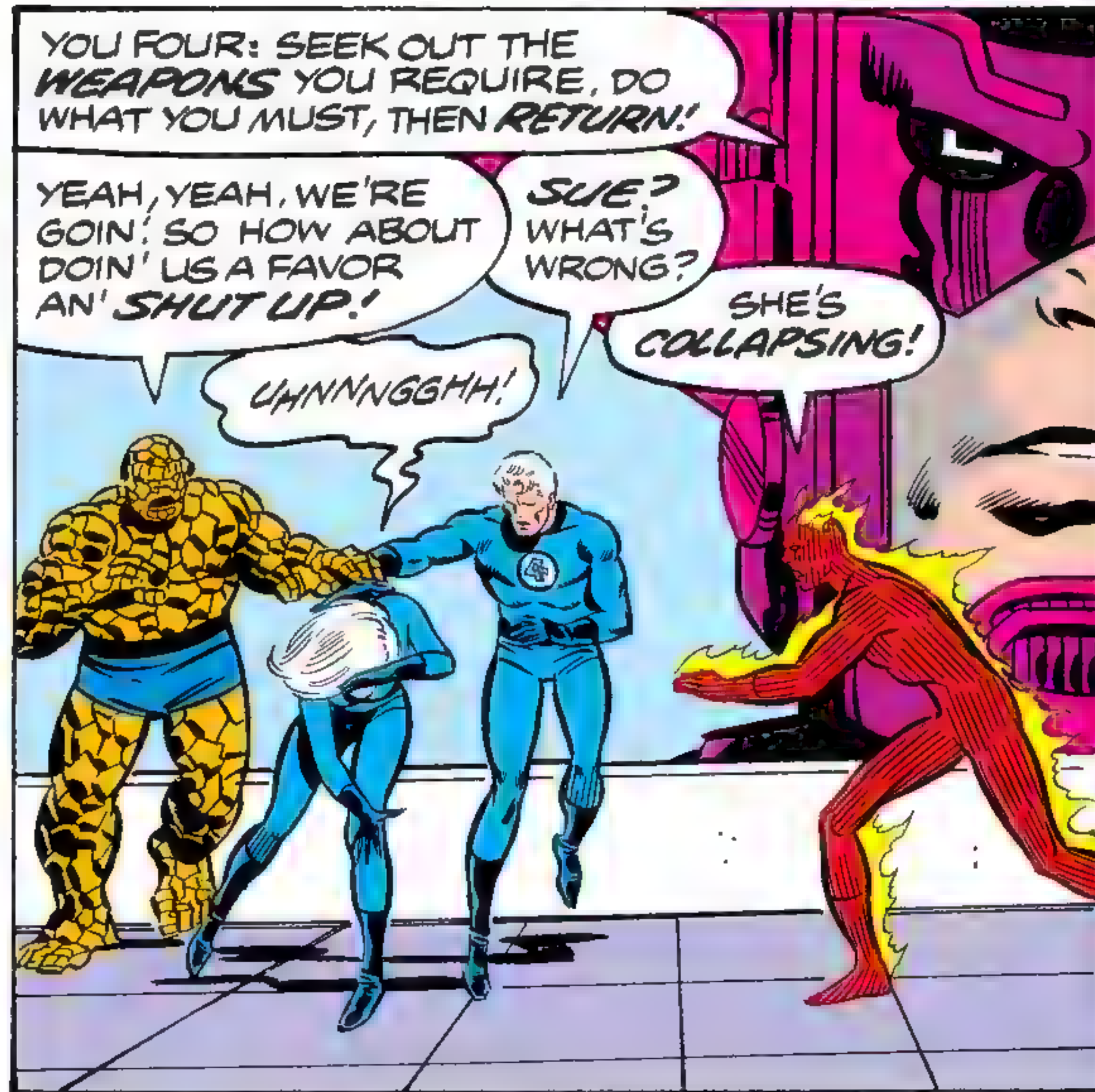
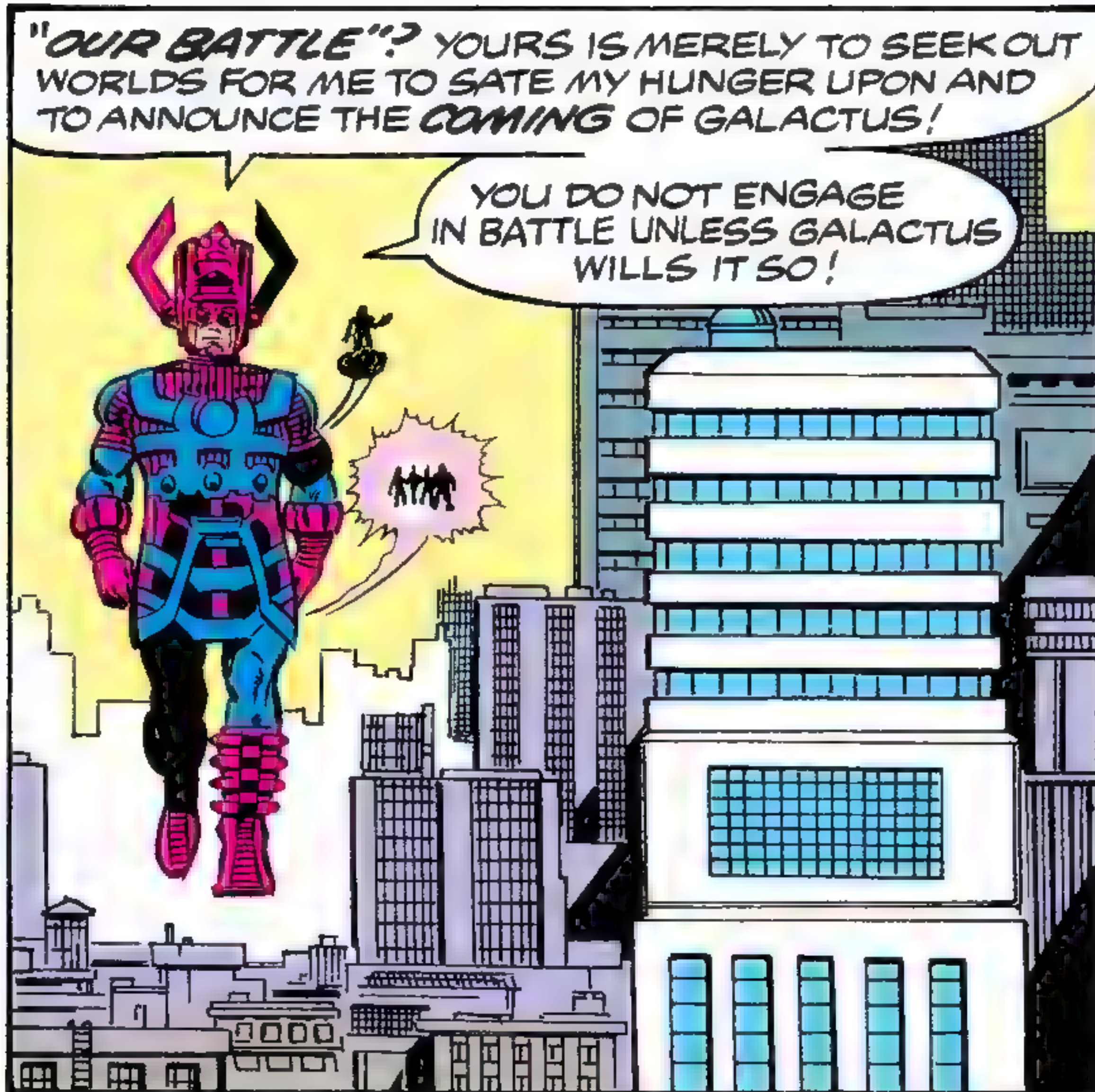


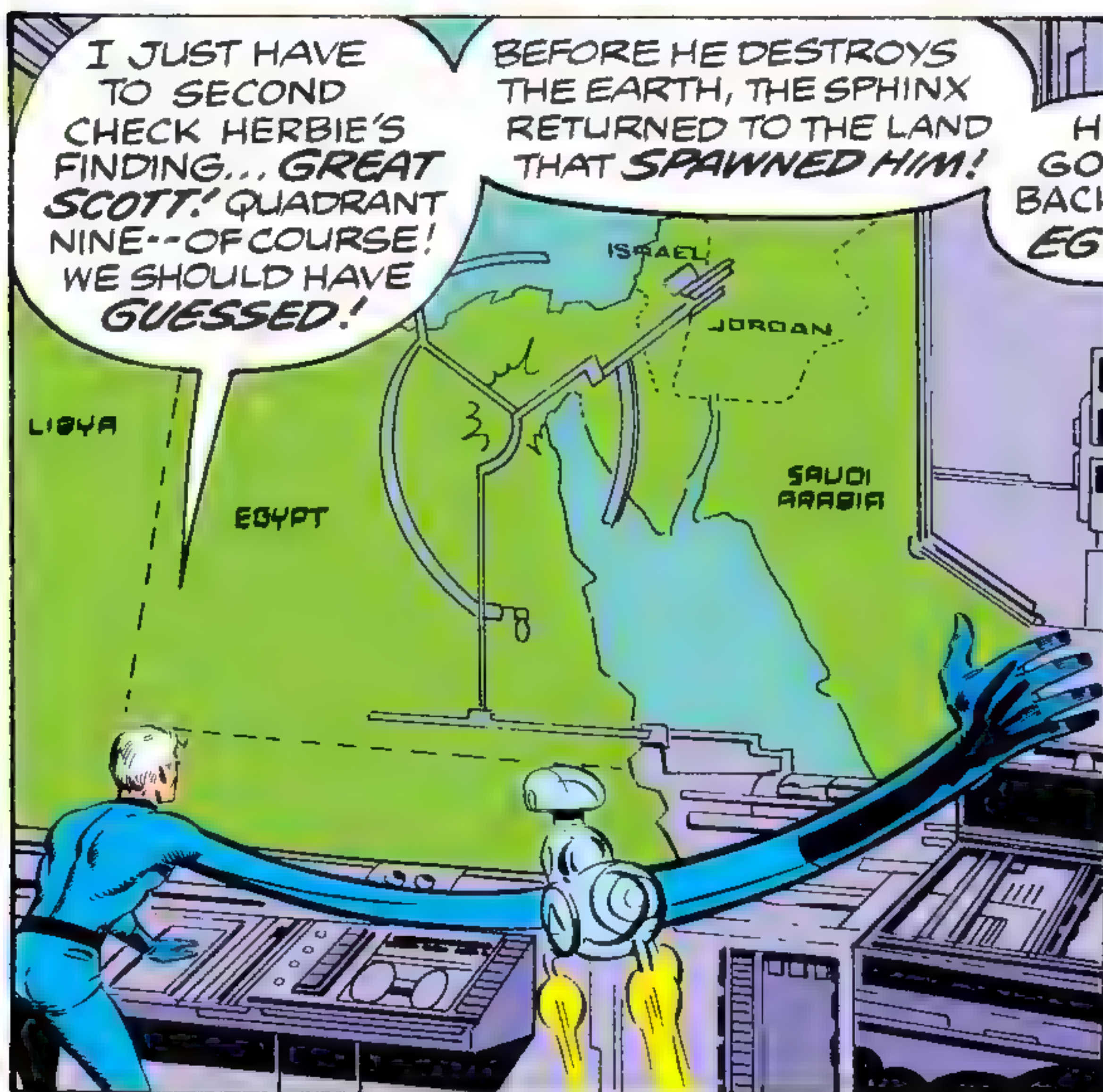
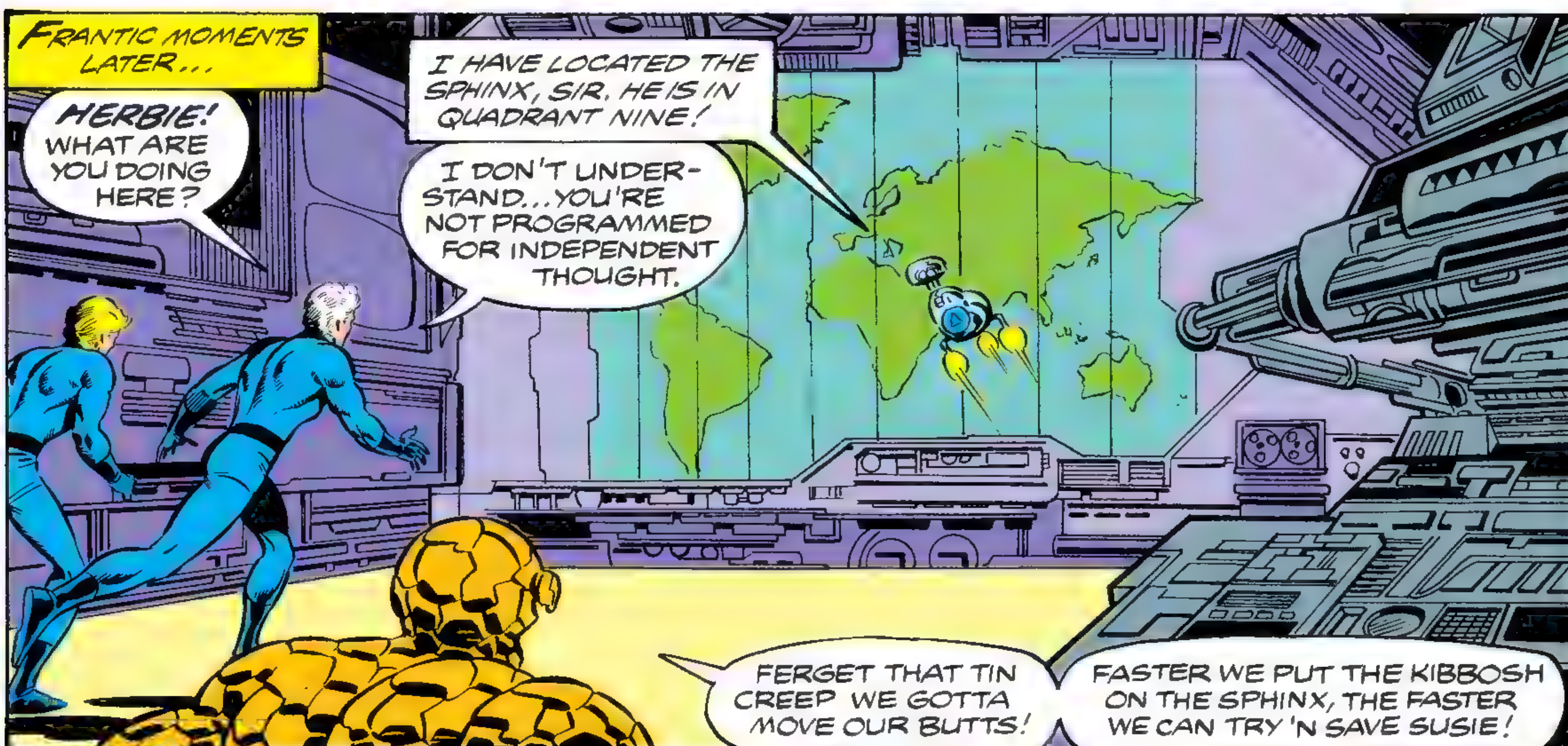
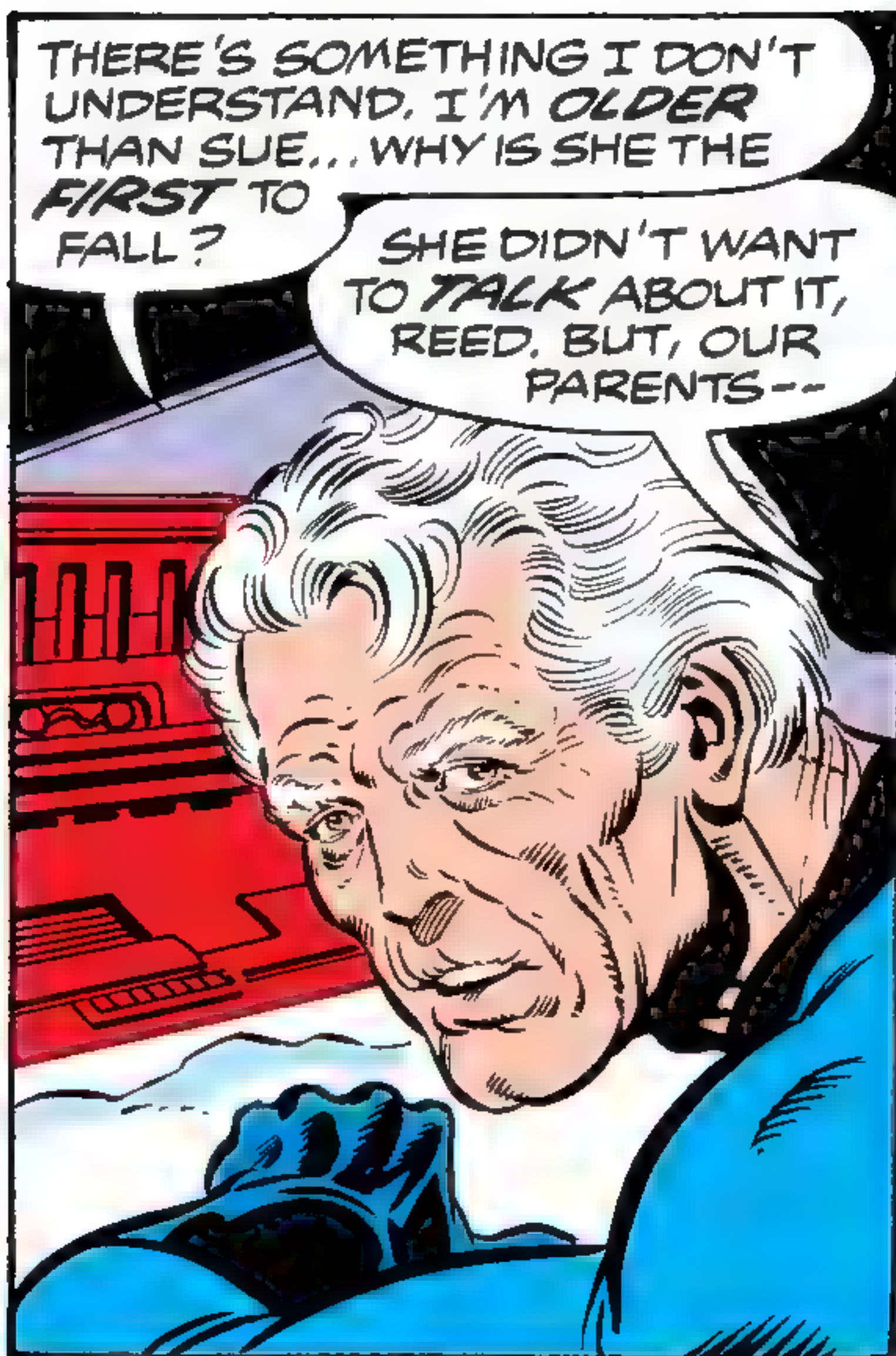
THEN, WHEN ALL LOOKS ITS GRIMMEST...



THE ANSWER IS EVIDENT A MOMENT LATER AS A MOUNTAIN-SIZED SHADOW CROSSES HALF OF MANHATTAN ISLAND...







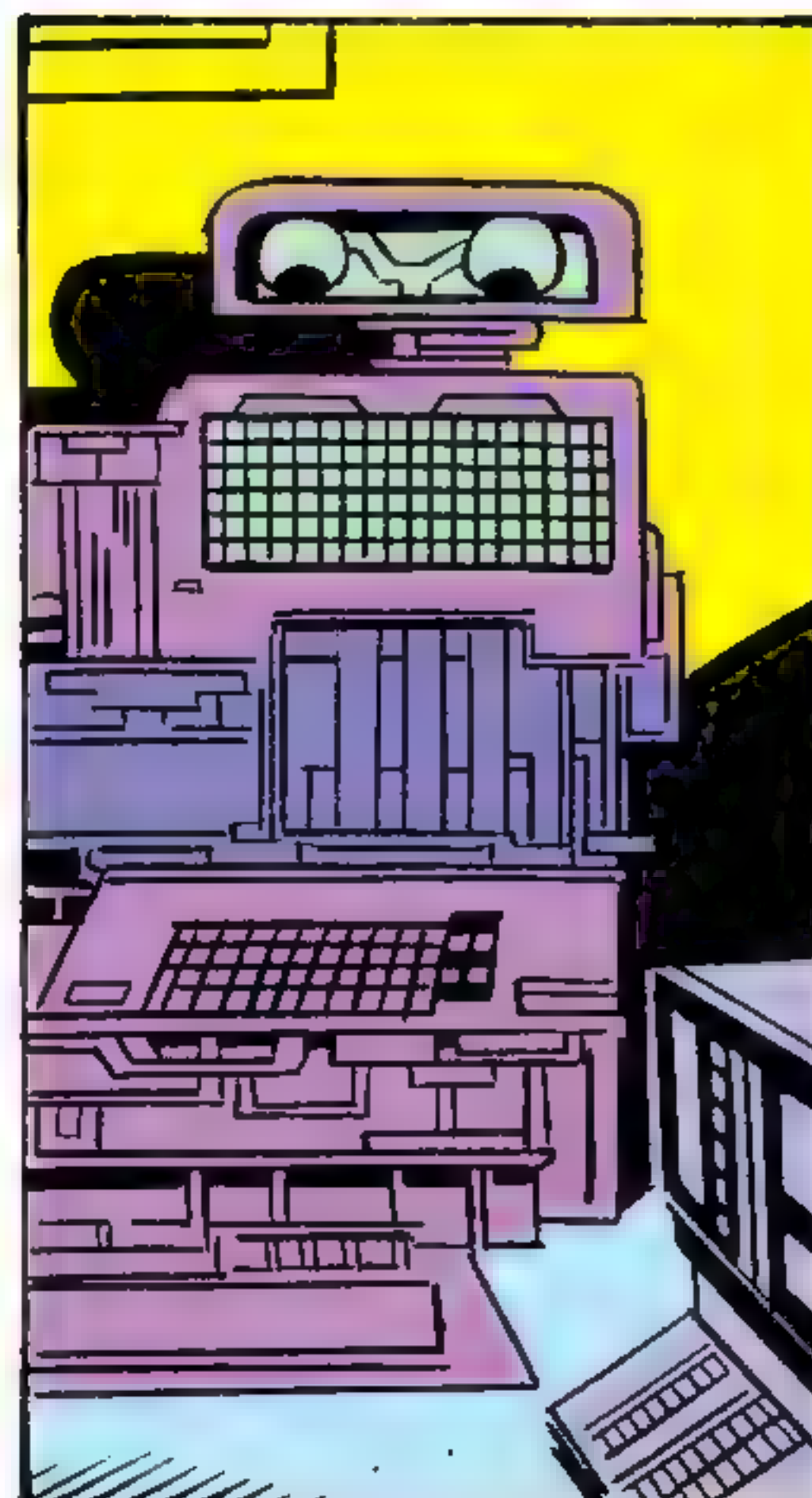
YOU THREE SHALL NOW *JOIN* AND WITNESS MY CONQUEST OF THIS PETTY USURPER YOU CALL THE SPHINX.

FOR ONCE THAT IS PAST, THEN THERE SHALL BE *NOTHING* TO PREVENT GALACTUS FROM FEEDING UPON YOUR PLANET'S ENERGIES!

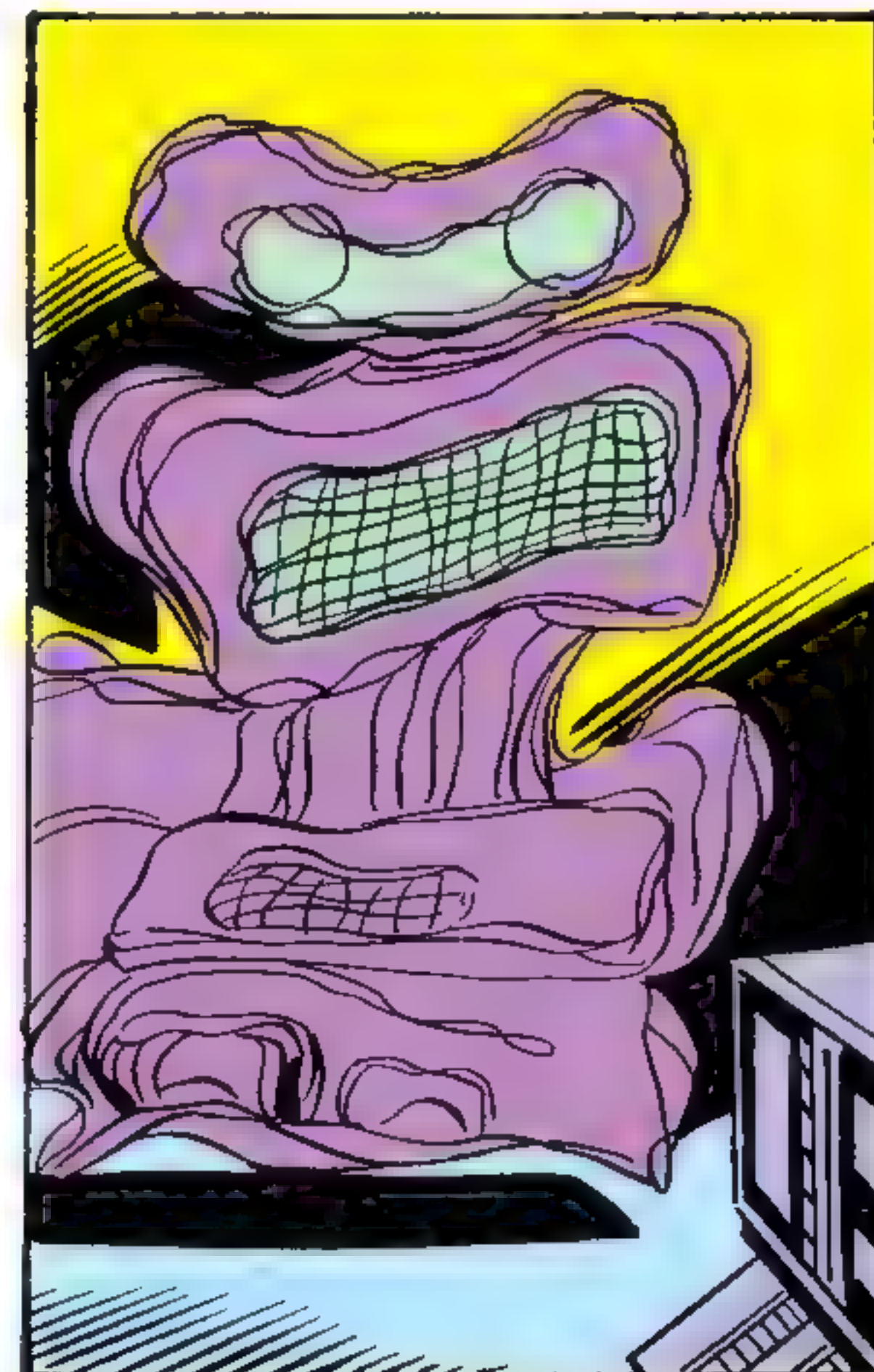
I DON'T LIKE THE WAY HE SAYS THAT, BIG-BRAIN. YOU BETTER HAVE SOME PLAN UP YER NOGGIN TA *STOP* 'IM!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, BEN. I HAVE!

AS THE FOUR RETREAT TOWARD DISTANT EGYPT, THE SILENT BAXTER BUILDING SUDDENLY COMES ALIVE...



AND IF ANY OF THEM HAD LAGGED BEHIND THEY WOULD HAVE NOTICED A MACHINE SUDDENLY SHIMMER AND CHANGE...



...AND FINALLY *METAMORPHOSE* INTO A... *SKRULL*--?

THEY'RE GONE...AND IT SEEMS MY SECONDARY MISSION MIGHT SUCCEED WITHOUT MY INTERFERENCE!

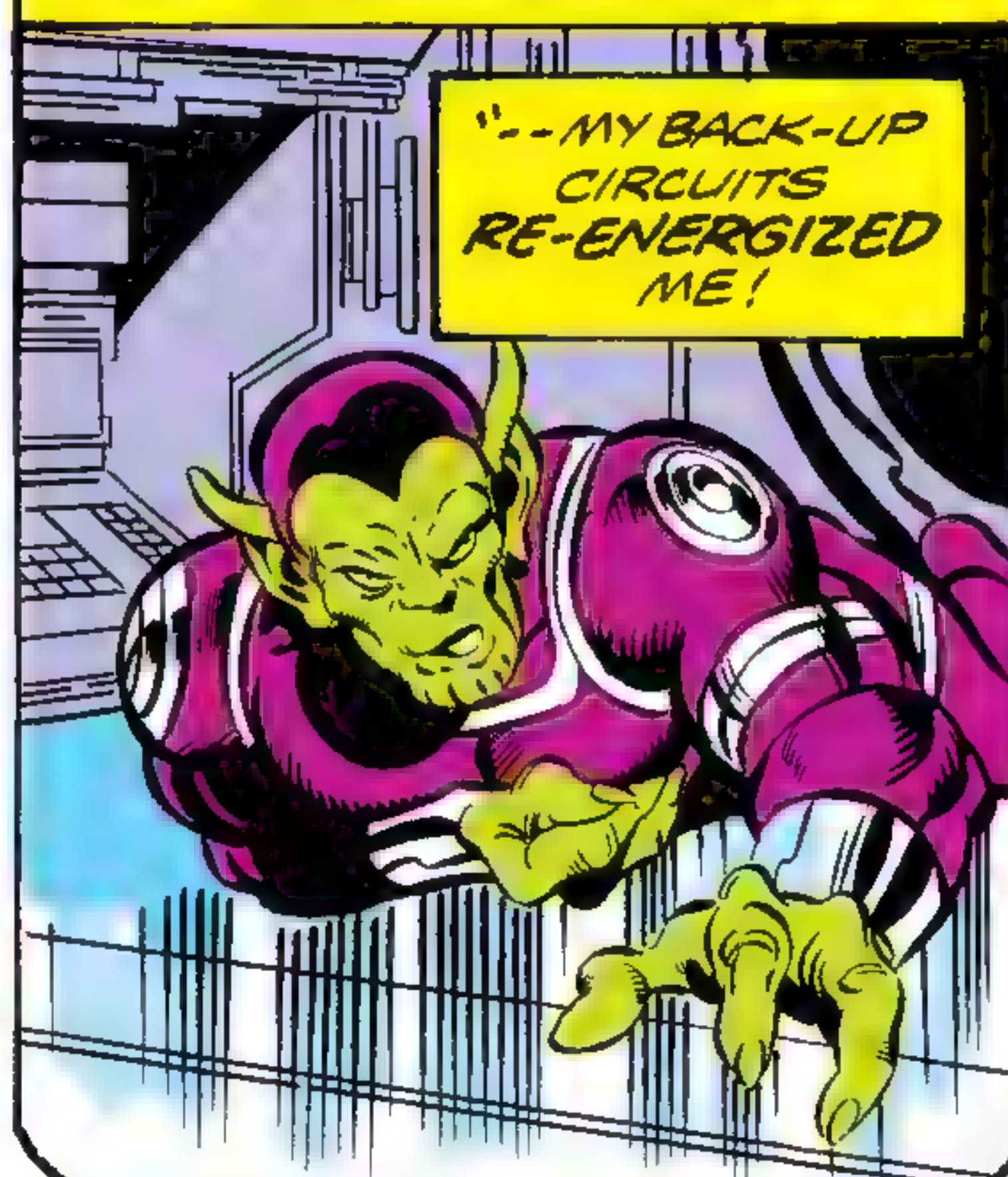
THOUGH I FAILED TO STOP XANDAR'S SUZERAIN...

"I MIGHT STILL HAVE DESTROYED THE FANTASTIC FOUR --



-- HAD NOT REED RICHARDS SOMEHOW *SENSED* WHAT I WAS AND MANAGED TO *SHORTCIRCUIT* ME!

"THEY LEFT ME FOR DEAD ON THE BAXTER BUILDING FLOOR, BUT MY SKRULL CREATORS HAD PLANNED WELL. AS SOON AS THE FANTASTIC FOUR LEFT ME ALONE--



-- MY BACK-UP CIRCUITS RE-ENERGIZED ME!

'ONCE REPOWERED, I MADE MY WAY TO RICHARDS' COMPUTERS WHERE I BEGAN MY MISSION. WITHIN HOURS I HAD SUCCEEDED-- EARTH'S PRIMARY DEFENSE SECRETS WERE MINE...



"...AND ALL MY INFORMATION WAS RELAYED TO THE SKRULL HIGH COMMAND!

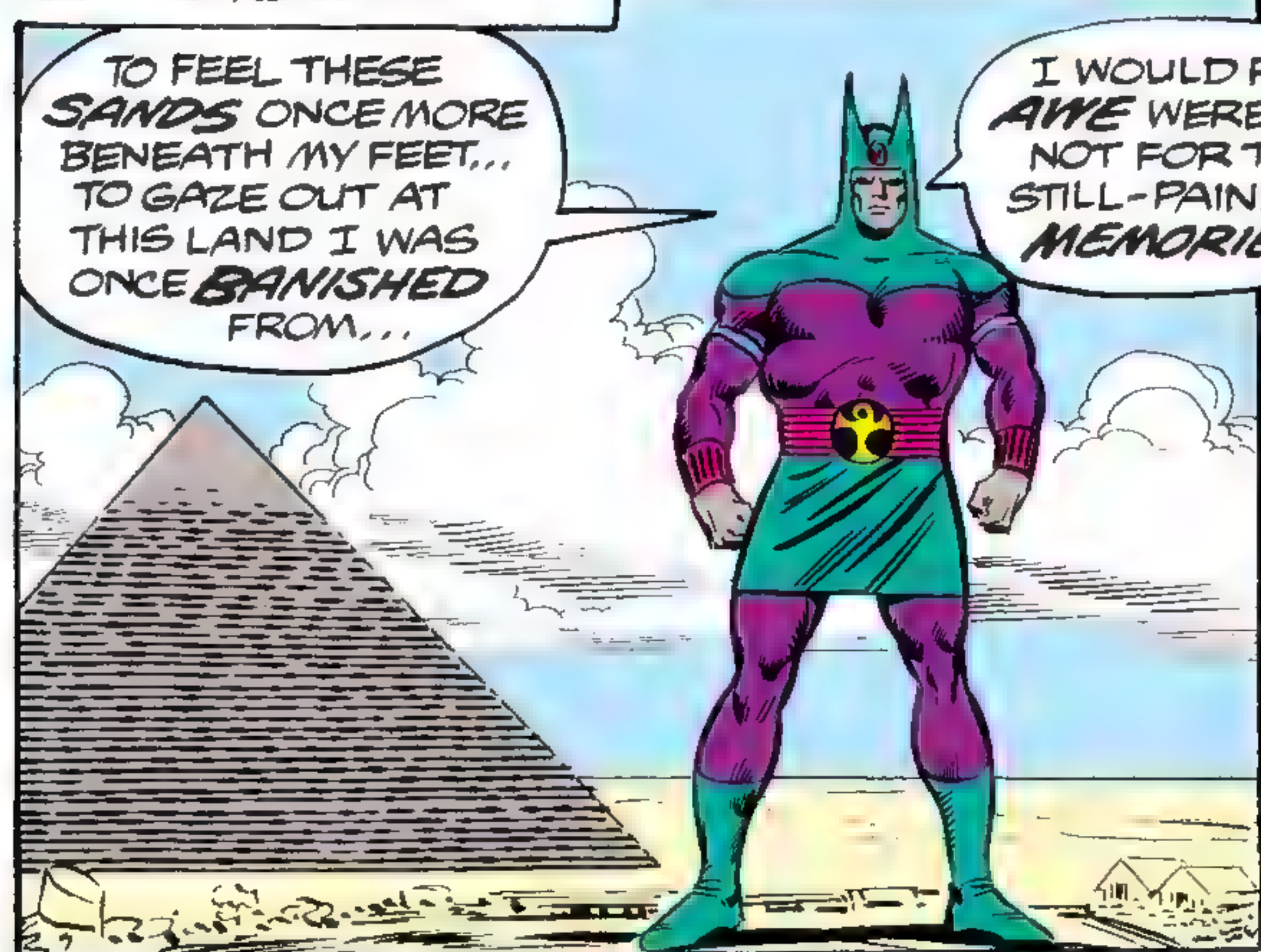
WHEN WE ARE READY FOR EARTH'S INVASION, THIS PETTY LITTLE PLANET WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DEFEND ITSELF!



THE SKRULL EMPIRE WILL CONTROL ONE MORE WORLD--

--AND NEITHER YOU NOR YOUR RAPIDLY DYING COMPATRIOTS WILL LIFT A HAND AGAINST US!

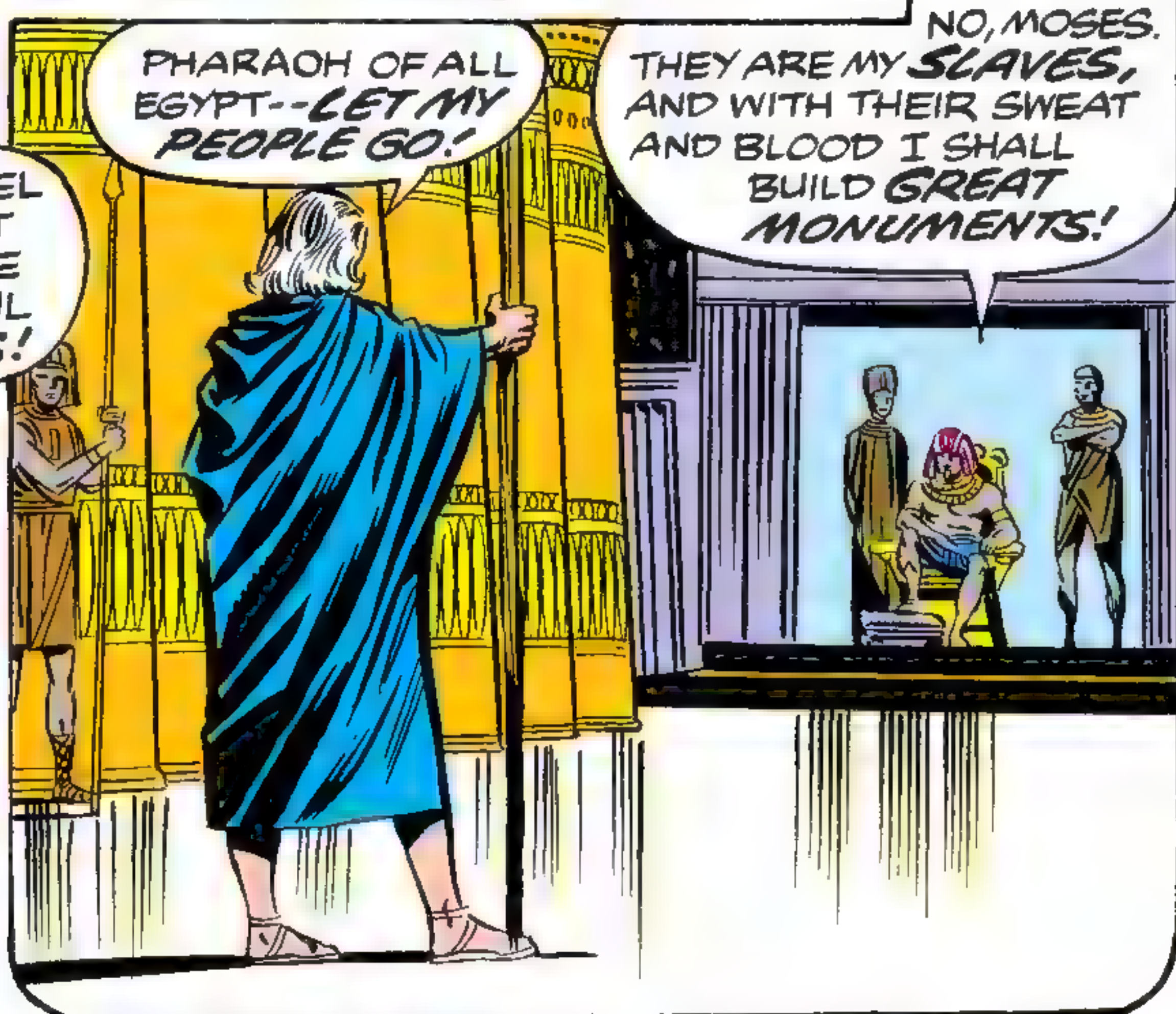
EGYPT: FOR MORE THAN THIRTY DYNASTIES, FOR MORE THAN **THREE THOUSAND YEARS**, THIS SMALL NATION STOOD SUPREME AND MIGHTY! NONE COULD RIVAL ITS SPLENDOR IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES! NONE COULD BREACH ITS POWERFUL DEFENSES AND ATTACK WITHOUT TERRIBLE RETRIBUTION!



TO FEEL THESE **SANDS** ONCE MORE BENEATH MY FEET... TO GAZE OUT AT THIS LAND I WAS ONCE **BANISHED** FROM...

I WOULD FEEL **AWE** WERE IT NOT FOR THE STILL-PAINFUL **MEMORIES!**

"HOW MANY MILLENNIA AGO WAS IT WHEN THE HEBREW PROPHET, MOSES, STOOD BEFORE GREAT RAMSES AND **SPOKE** UNTO HIM..."



PHARAOH OF ALL EGYPT--**LET MY PEOPLE GO!**

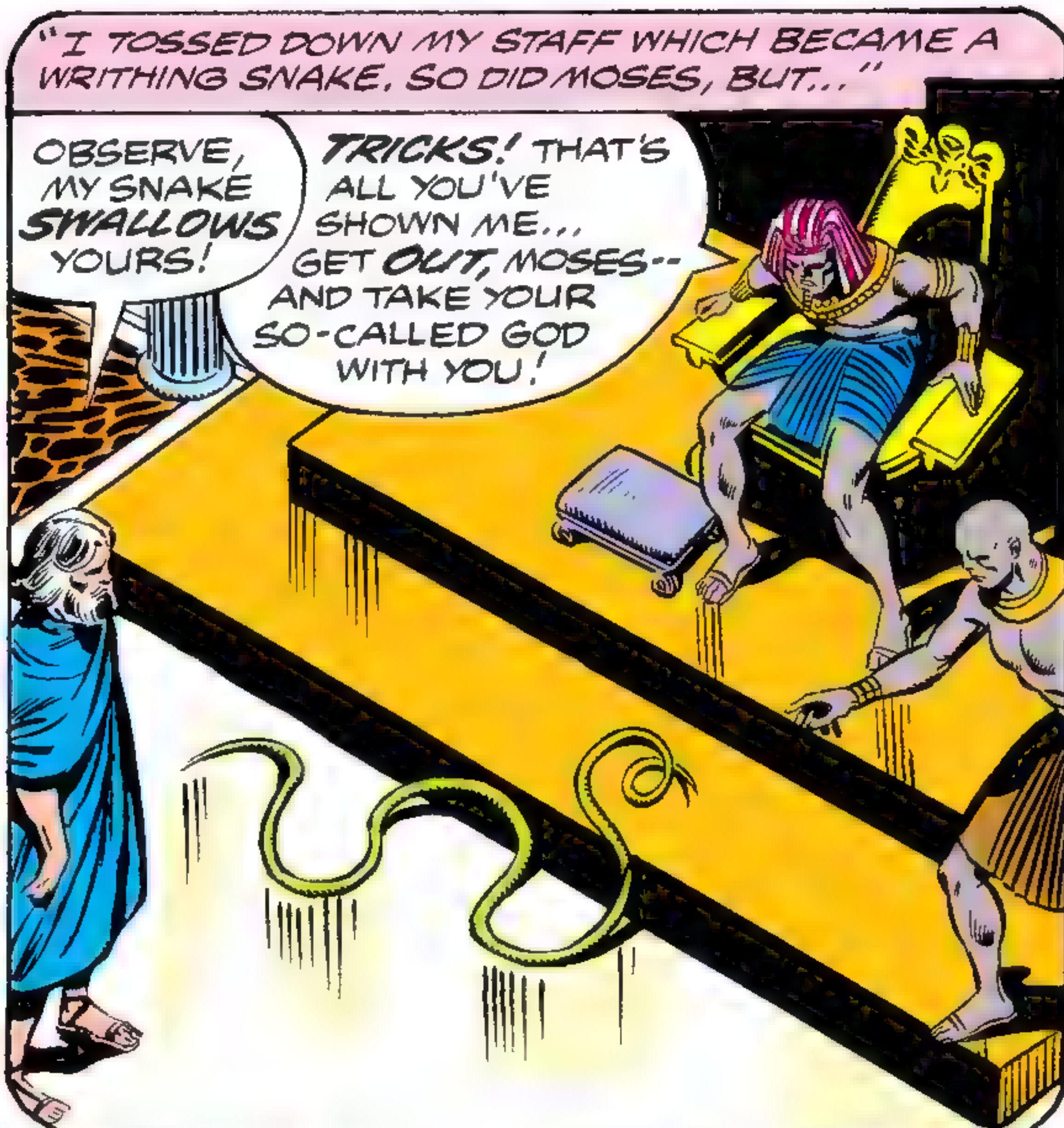
NO, MOSES. THEY ARE MY **SLAVES**, AND WITH THEIR SWEAT AND BLOOD I SHALL BUILD **GREAT MONUMENTS!**



NEVER, RAMSES! YOU SHALL ONLY BUILD A MONUMENT TO **FAILURE!** THE GOD OF ISRAEL WILL MAKE CERTAIN OF THAT!

SO, YOUR GOD IS MORE POWERFUL THAN **ALL** THE GODS OF EGYPT, EH? PERHAPS WE SHOULD SEE, MOSES.

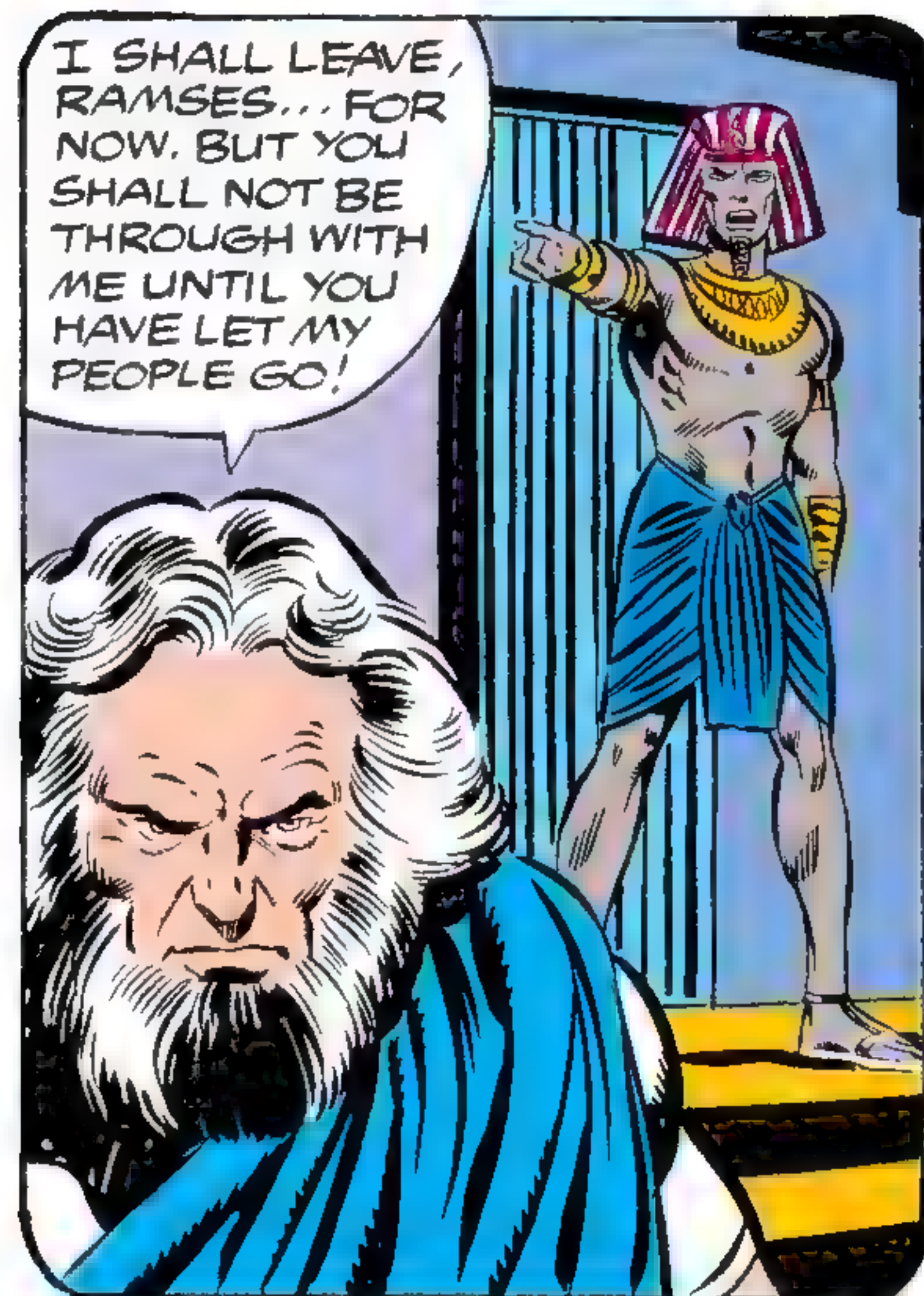
RAMSES SUMMONED ME, HIS CHIEF WIZARD, TO CONFRONT THE HEBREW, AND THOUGH I COULD SEE THE DIVINE POWER THAT WAS HIS, STILL I **OBEYED** MY PHARAOH...



"I TOSSED DOWN MY STAFF WHICH BECAME A WRITHING SNAKE, SO DID MOSES, BUT..."

OBSERVE, MY SNAKE **SWALLOWS** YOURS!

TRICKS! THAT'S ALL YOU'VE SHOWN ME... GET **OUT**, MOSES-- AND TAKE YOUR SO-CALLED GOD WITH YOU!



I SHALL LEAVE, RAMSES... FOR NOW. BUT YOU SHALL NOT BE THROUGH WITH ME UNTIL YOU HAVE LET MY PEOPLE GO!



MAGICIAN! YOU WERE MY CHIEF SORCERER, YET YOU **FAILED** ME! FROM THIS MOMENT FORTH, YOU ARE **BANISHED** FROM THE LAND OF THE NILE!

LEAVE NOW, FRAUD, BEFORE I HAVE YOU **SLAIN!**

"HOW LONG I TRUDGED THRU THE TORRID DESERT I STILL DO NOT KNOW. DAYS, MONTHS, YEARS RAN TOGETHER LIKE THE ENDLESS BURNING SANDS BENEATH MY NAKED FEET..."



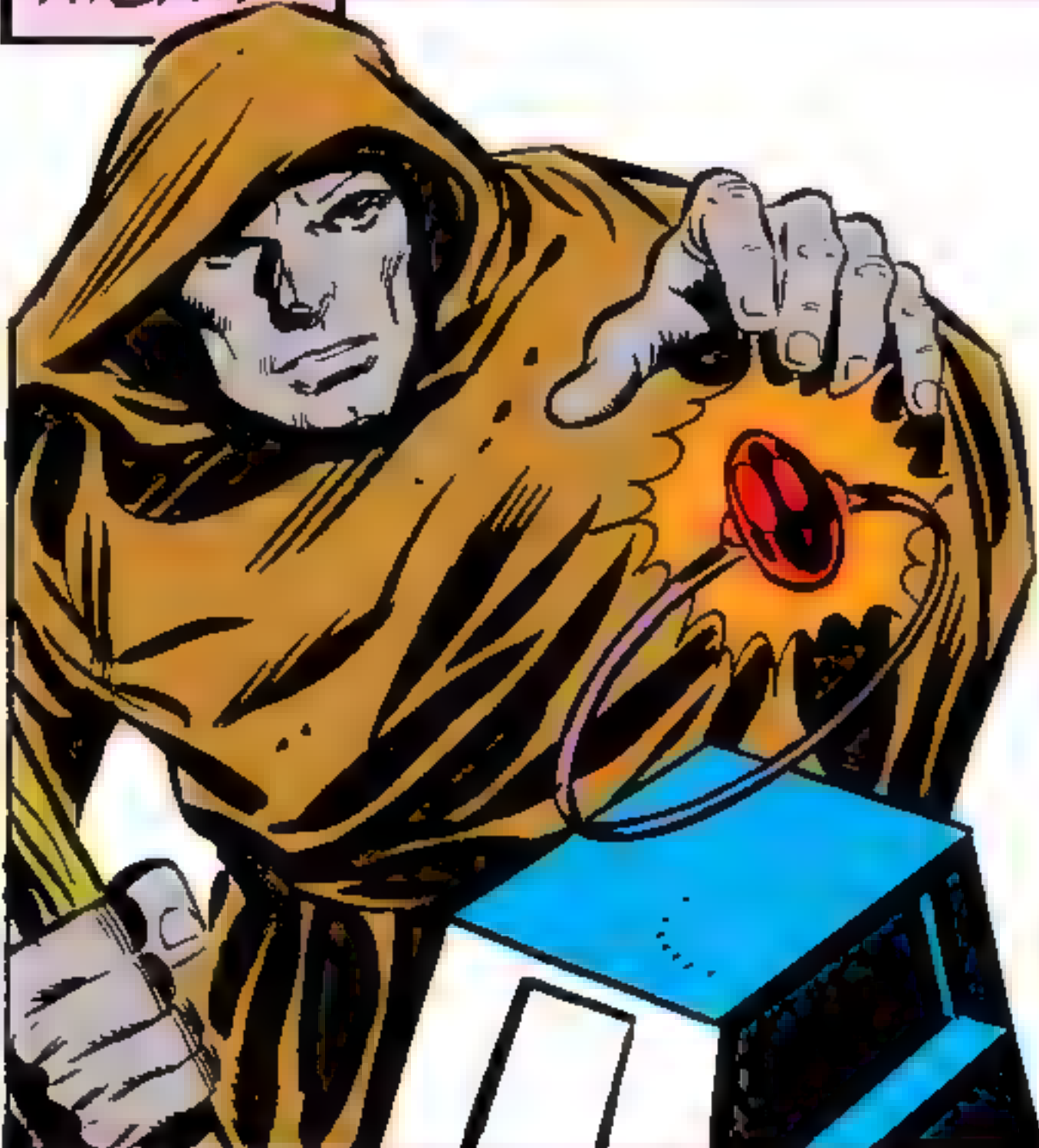
"THE POWERFUL SUN **BLINDED** ME. THE ENDLESS HEAT PARCHED MY SKIN, **BLEACHED** MY FLESH. YET, STILL I STAGGERED ON.



"I KNEW **DESTINY** CALLED ME. I KNEW SOME **GRAND FUTURE** AWAITED ME.

"THEN, WHEN EVEN I HAD LONG GIVEN UP HOPE, I SAW IT.

"THE TEMPLE BECKONED ME TO ENTER, AND SO, CAUTIOUSLY, I DID. THEN THROUGH AN AMBER HAZE, I SOMEHOW **SAW** IT... IT GLOWED LIKE A FIRE IN THE NIGHT.



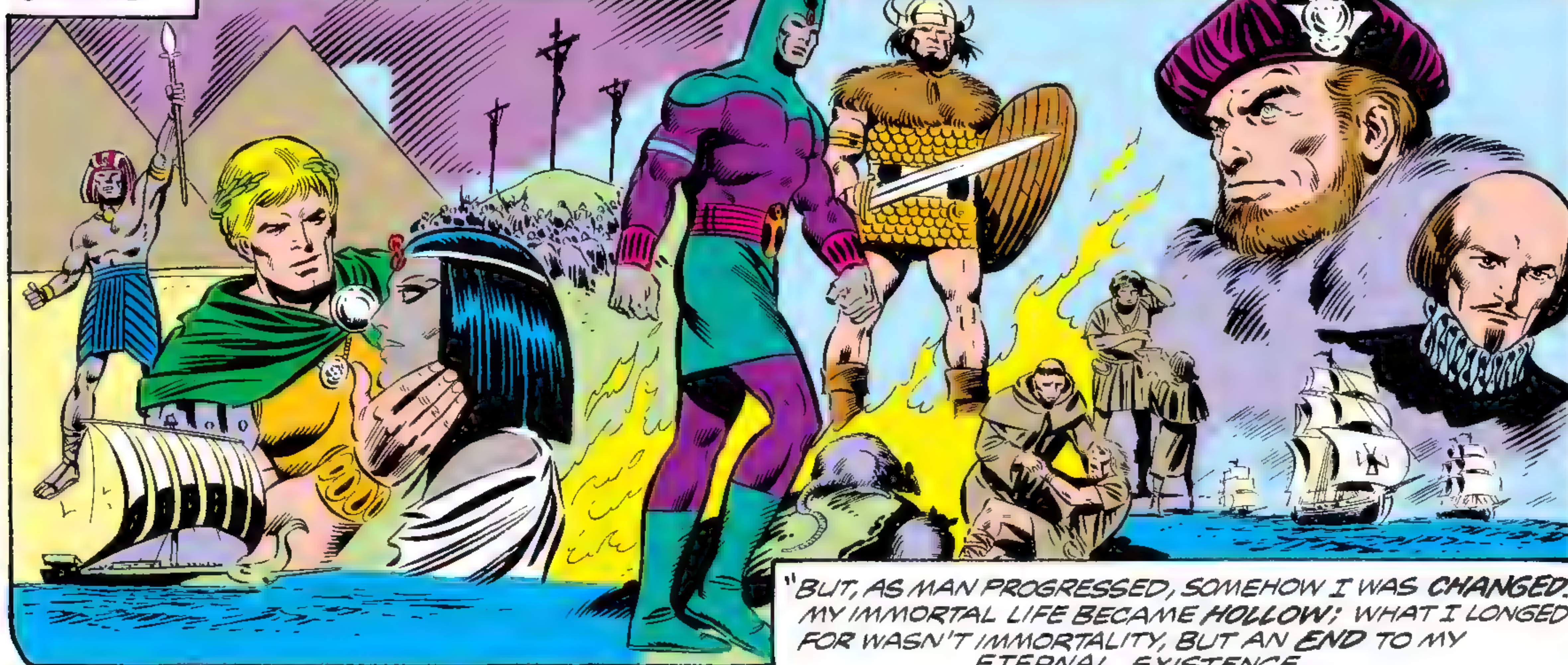
"I REACHED OUT TO THE BURNING JEWEL, TOOK IT INTO MY HANDS AND SOMEHOW IT **SPOKE** TO ME.

"I PUT IT TO MY FOREHEAD, AND SUDDENLY I WAS NO LONGER HUMAN! SUDDENLY I WAS SOMETHING DIFFERENT, SOMETHING GREAT... **SOMETHING POWERFUL!**



"THEN AND THERE, I HAD BECOME-- **THE SPHINX!**

"I WAS AN **IMMORTAL**, ONE OF THE GODS THEMSELVES! AND LIKE A GOD I WALKED THE ROAD OF HUMAN HISTORY, ALTERING IT **SUBTLY**, PLAYING WITH DESTINIES, LEADING MAN IN FRUITLESS CIRCLES.



"BUT, AS MAN PROGRESSED, SOMEHOW I WAS CHANGED. MY IMMORTAL LIFE BECAME **HOLLOW**; WHAT I LONGED FOR WASN'T IMMORTALITY, BUT AN **END** TO MY ETERNAL EXISTENCE.

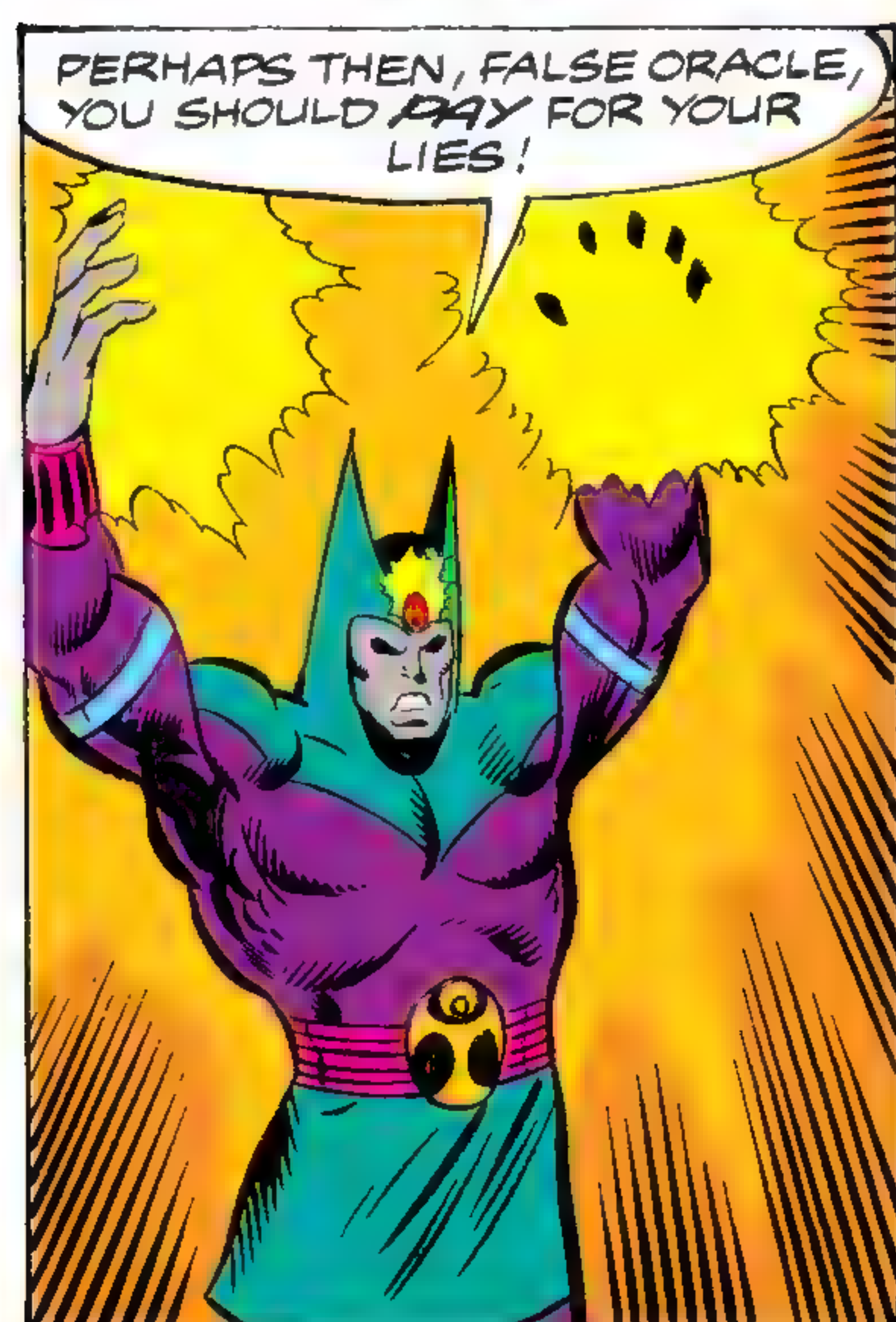
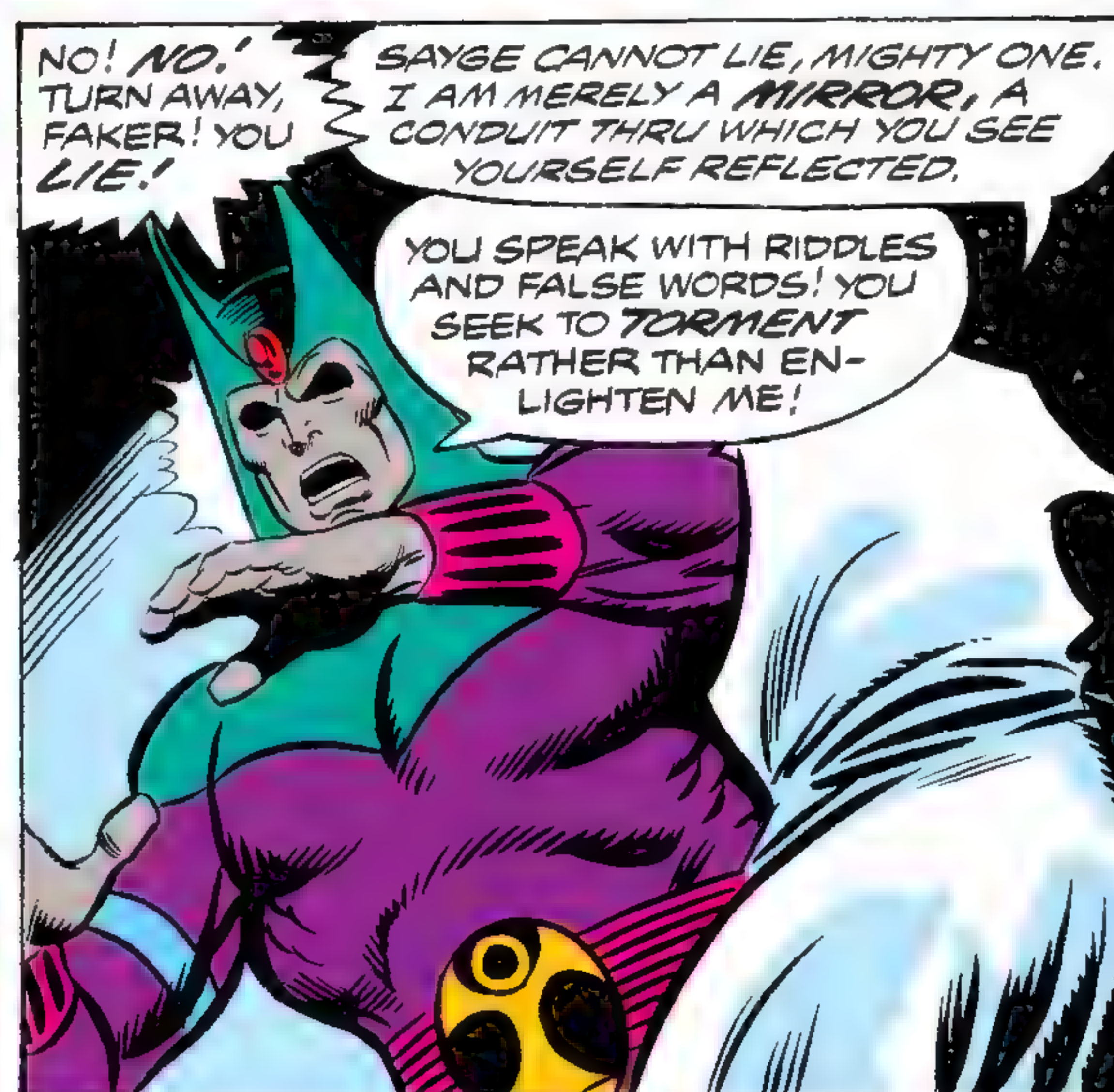
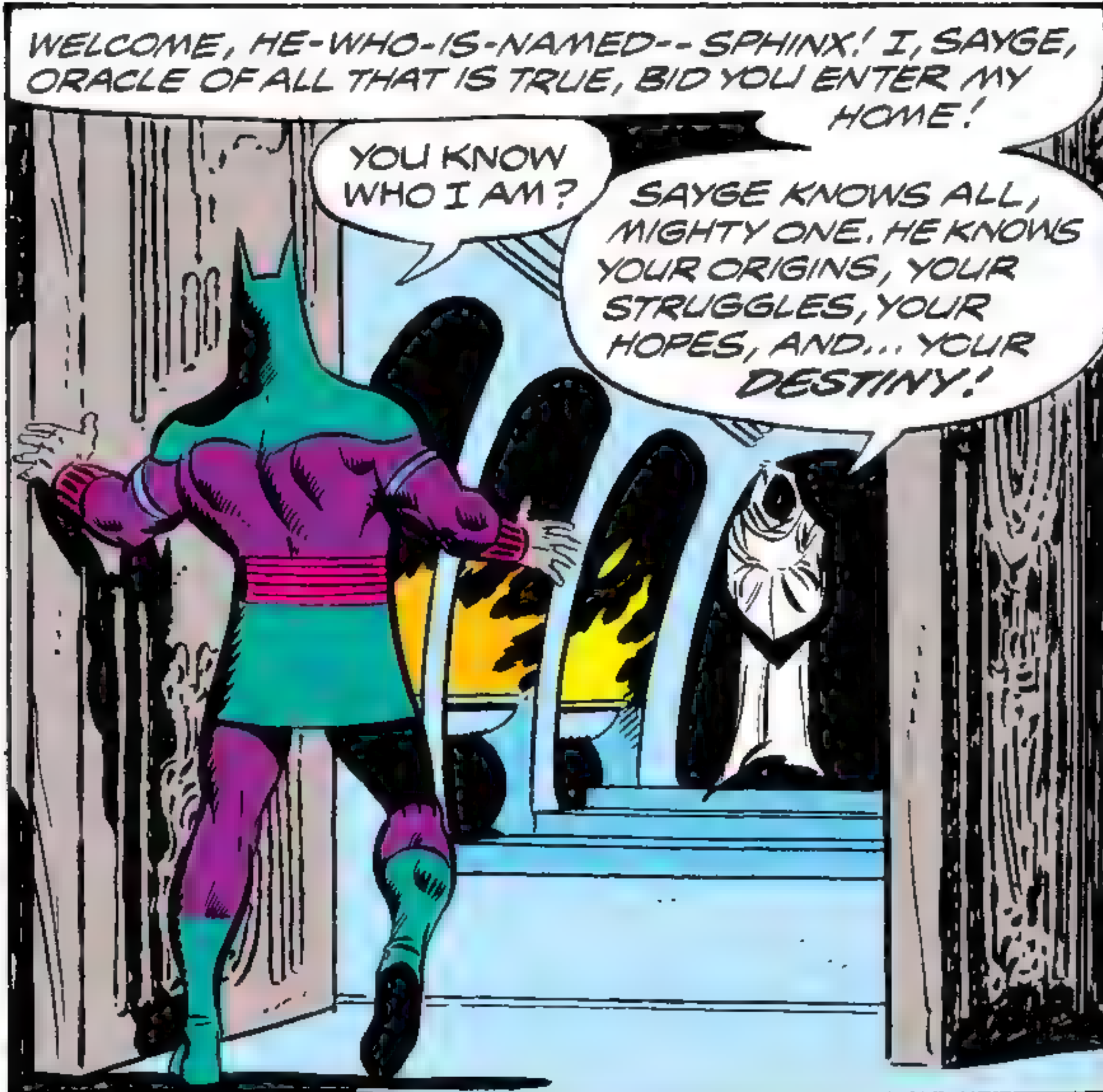
"I SOUGHT **DEATH**, YET ALWAYS IT **ELUDED** ME!



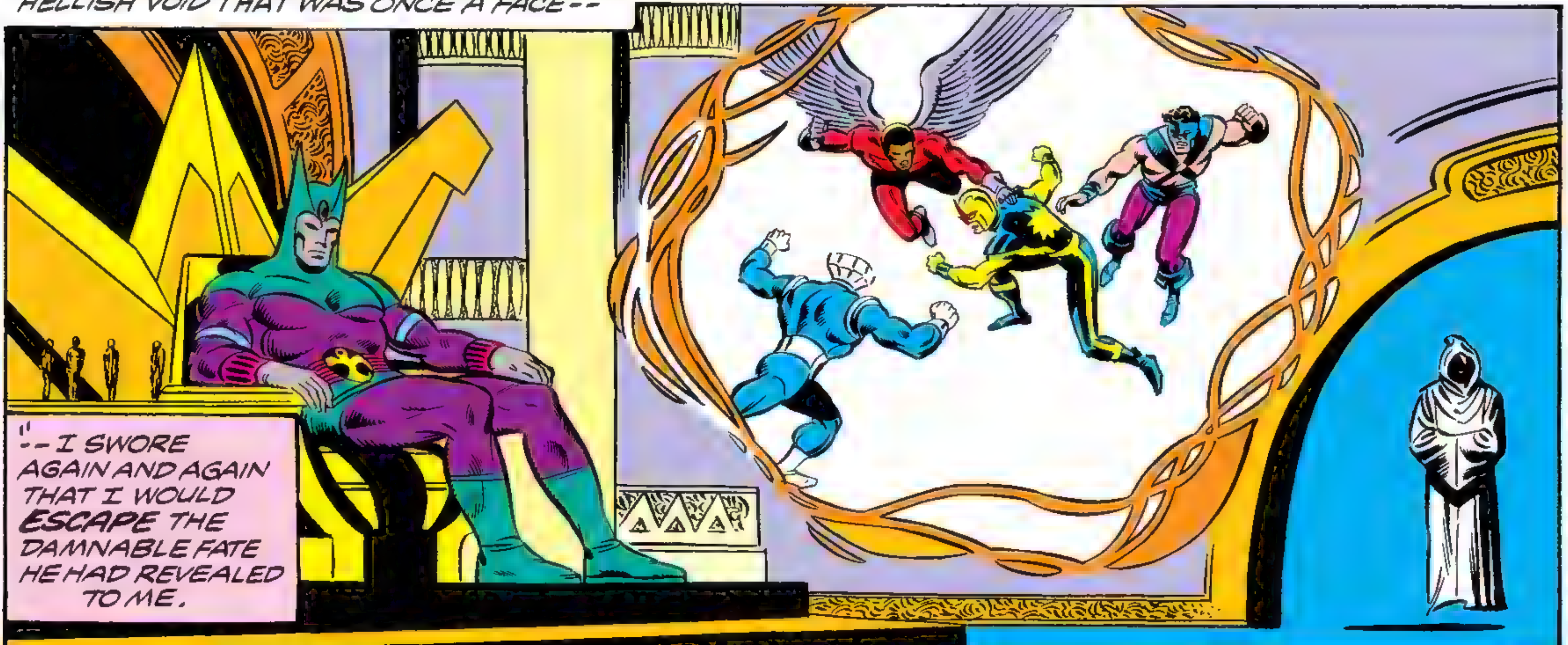
"MY JEWEL OF LIFE-- MY **KA-STONE**-- WOULD NOT LET ME DIE, THUS DID I TAKE LEAVE OF MAN AND BANISH MYSELF TO THE SNOW-CAPPED HIMALAYAS.



"ON MY WANDERINGS I HAD HEARD OF A **STRANGER**... ONE WHOSE POWERS EQUALED MY OWN. BELOW ME, GENERATIONS PASSED BEFORE I FOUND HIS HIDDEN SANCTORUM!



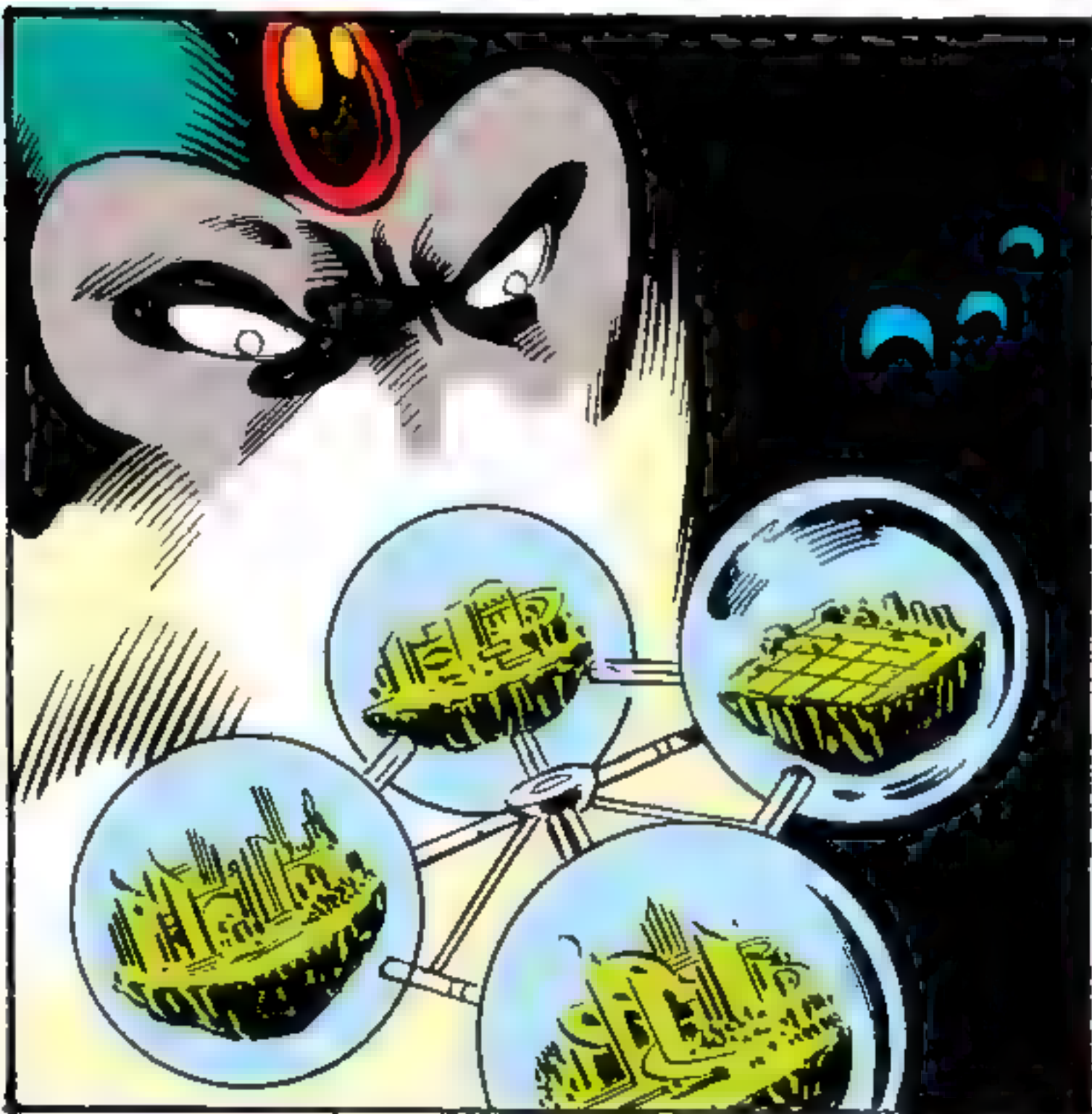
"I COULD NO MORE KILL SAYGE THAN I COULD DESTROY MYSELF. YET EACH TIME I GAZED INTO THAT HELLISH VOID THAT WAS ONCE A FACE--



-- I SWORE AGAIN AND AGAIN THAT I WOULD **ESCAPE** THE DAMNABLE FATE HE HAD REVEALED TO ME.

"FOR CENTURIES I **FAILED** IN MY QUEST, UNTIL I LEARNED THE EXISTENCE OF A **COSMIC SECRET** WHICH WAS UNKNOWNINGLY POSSESSED BY A CHILD WHO CALLED HIMSELF **NOVA**!

"THROUGH THIS STRIPLING I LEARNED OF ANOTHER WORLD, ONE CALLED **XANDAR**...



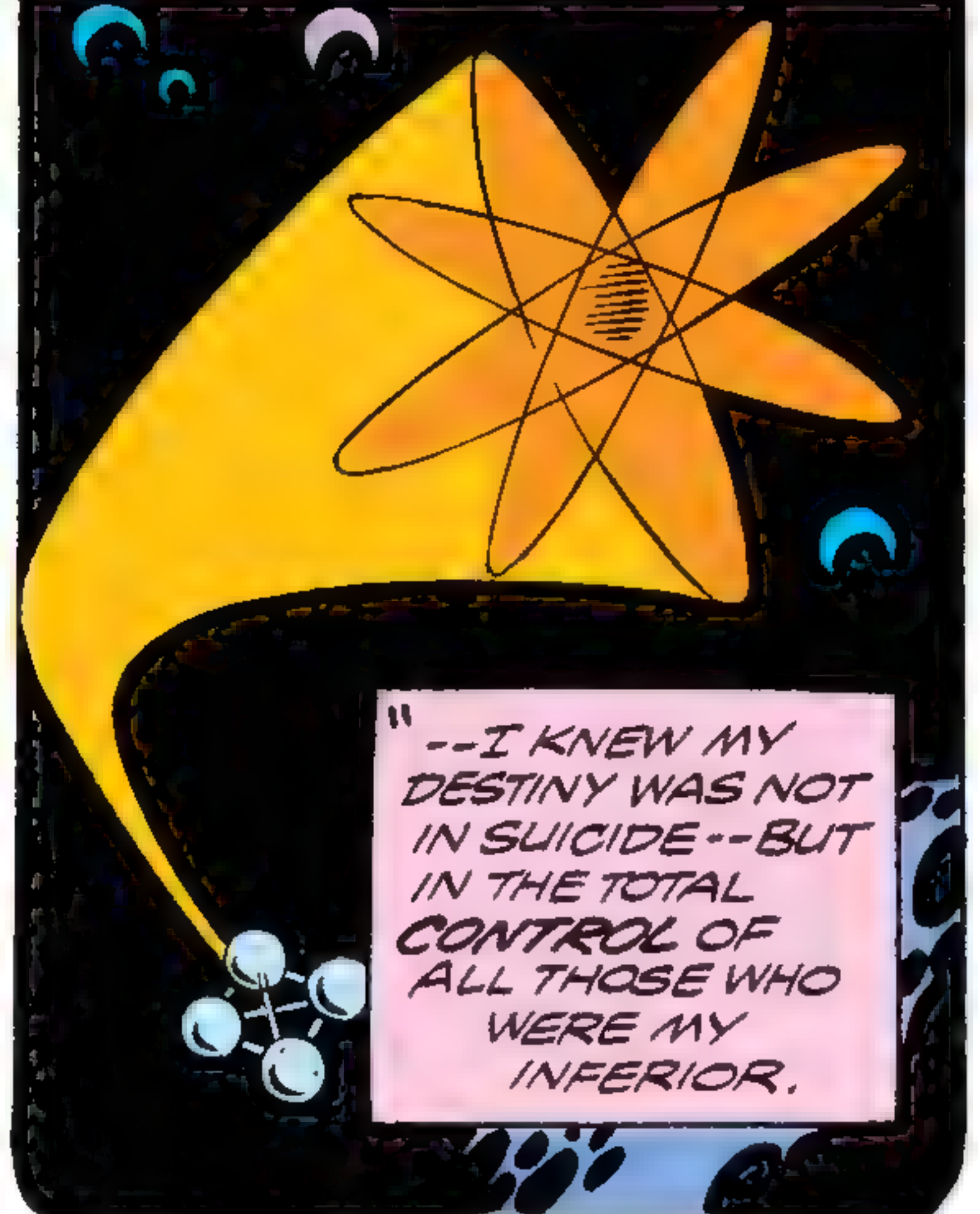
"...AND OF THAT PLANET'S **LIVING COMPUTERS** WHICH CONTAINED THE **ANSWER** I SOUGHT TO END MY ETERNAL LIFE FOR-- EVER!

"HOW **STRANGE** IT IS NOW TO THINK I WAS FOOL ENOUGH TO WANT TO DIE!



"FOR, ONCE I ABSORBED THE INFORMATION THE **LIVING COMPUTERS** SPEWED FORTH--

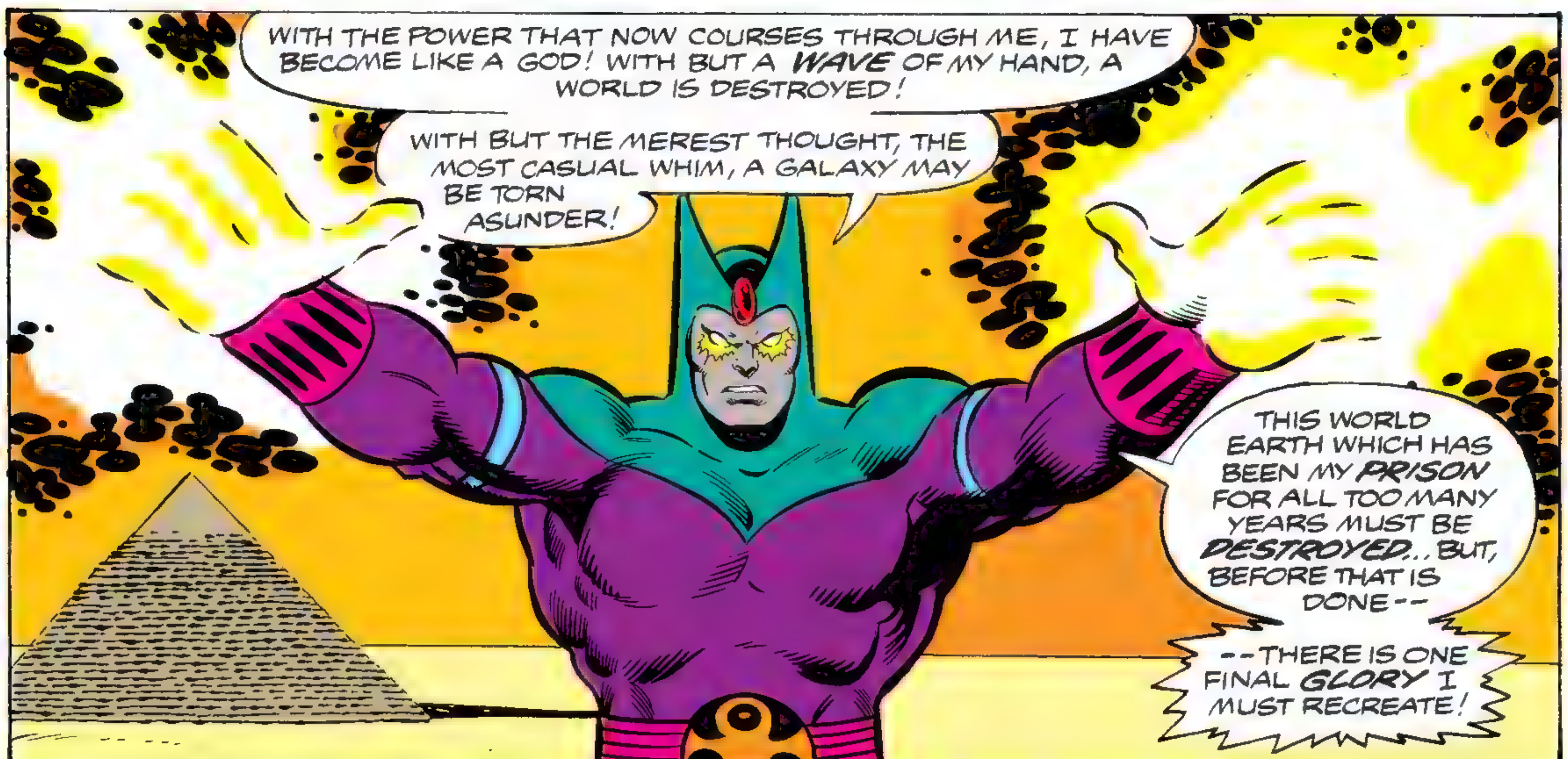
--ONCE I RECEIVED THE **POWERS** THAT INFORMATION PROVIDED--



--I KNEW MY DESTINY WAS NOT IN **SUICIDE**--BUT IN THE **TOTAL CONTROL** OF ALL THOSE WHO WERE MY **INFERIOR**.

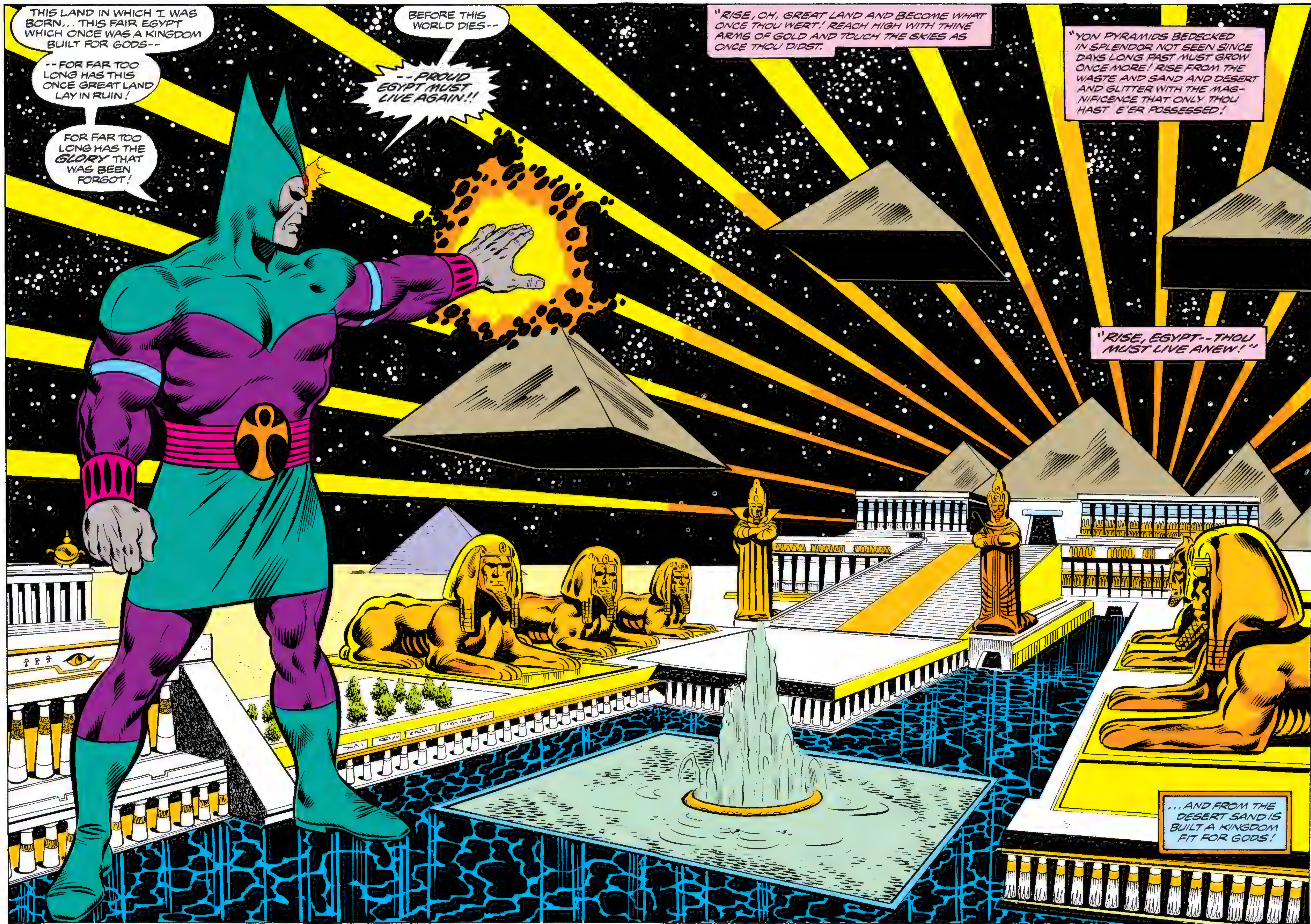
WITH THE POWER THAT NOW COURSES THROUGH ME, I HAVE BECOME LIKE A GOD! WITH BUT A **WAVE** OF MY HAND, A WORLD IS DESTROYED!

WITH BUT THE MEREST THOUGHT, THE MOST CASUAL WHIM, A GALAXY MAY BE TORN ASUNDER!



THIS WORLD EARTH WHICH HAS BEEN MY **PRISON** FOR ALL TOO MANY YEARS MUST BE **DESTROYED**... BUT, BEFORE THAT IS DONE--

--THERE IS ONE **FINAL GLORY** I MUST RECREATE!



THIS LAND IN WHICH I WAS BORN... THIS FAIR EGYPT WHICH ONCE WAS A KINGDOM BUILT FOR GODS--

-- FOR FAR TOO LONG HAS THIS ONCE GREAT LAND LAY IN RUIN!

FOR FAR TOO LONG HAS THE GLORY THAT WAS BEEN FORGOT!

BEFORE THIS WORLD DIES--

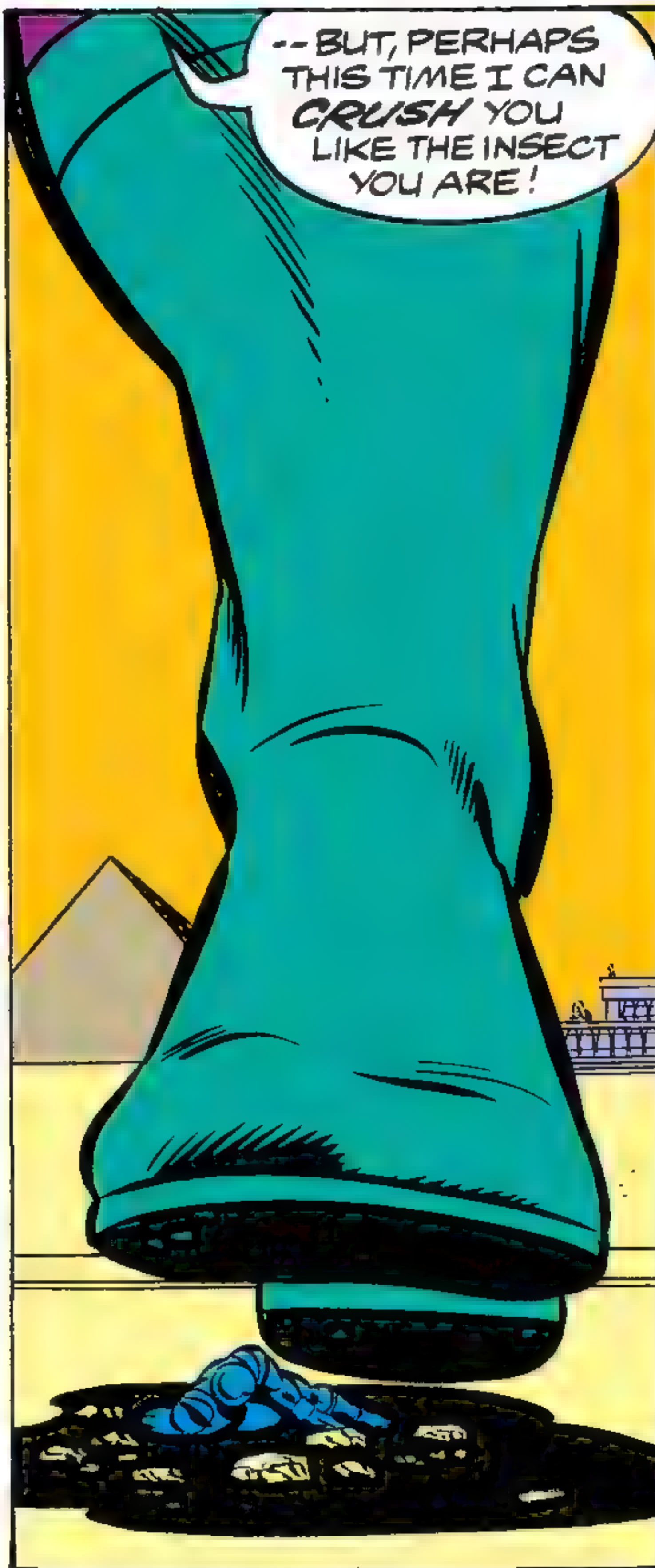
-- PROUD EGYPT MUST LIVE AGAIN!!

"RISE, OH, GREAT LAND AND BECOME WHAT ONCE THOU WERT! REACH HIGH WITH THINE ARMS OF GOLD AND TOUCH THE SKIES AS ONCE THOU DIDST."

"YON PYRAMIDS BEDECKED IN SPLENDOR NOT SEEN SINCE DAYS LONG PAST, MUST GROW ONCE MORE! RISE FROM THE WASTE AND SAND AND DESERT AND GLITTER WITH THE MAGNIFICENCE THAT ONLY THOU HAST E'ER POSSESSED!"

"RISE, EGYPT--THOU MUST LIVE ANEW!"

...AND FROM THE DESERT SAND IS BUILT A KINGDOM FIT FOR GODS!

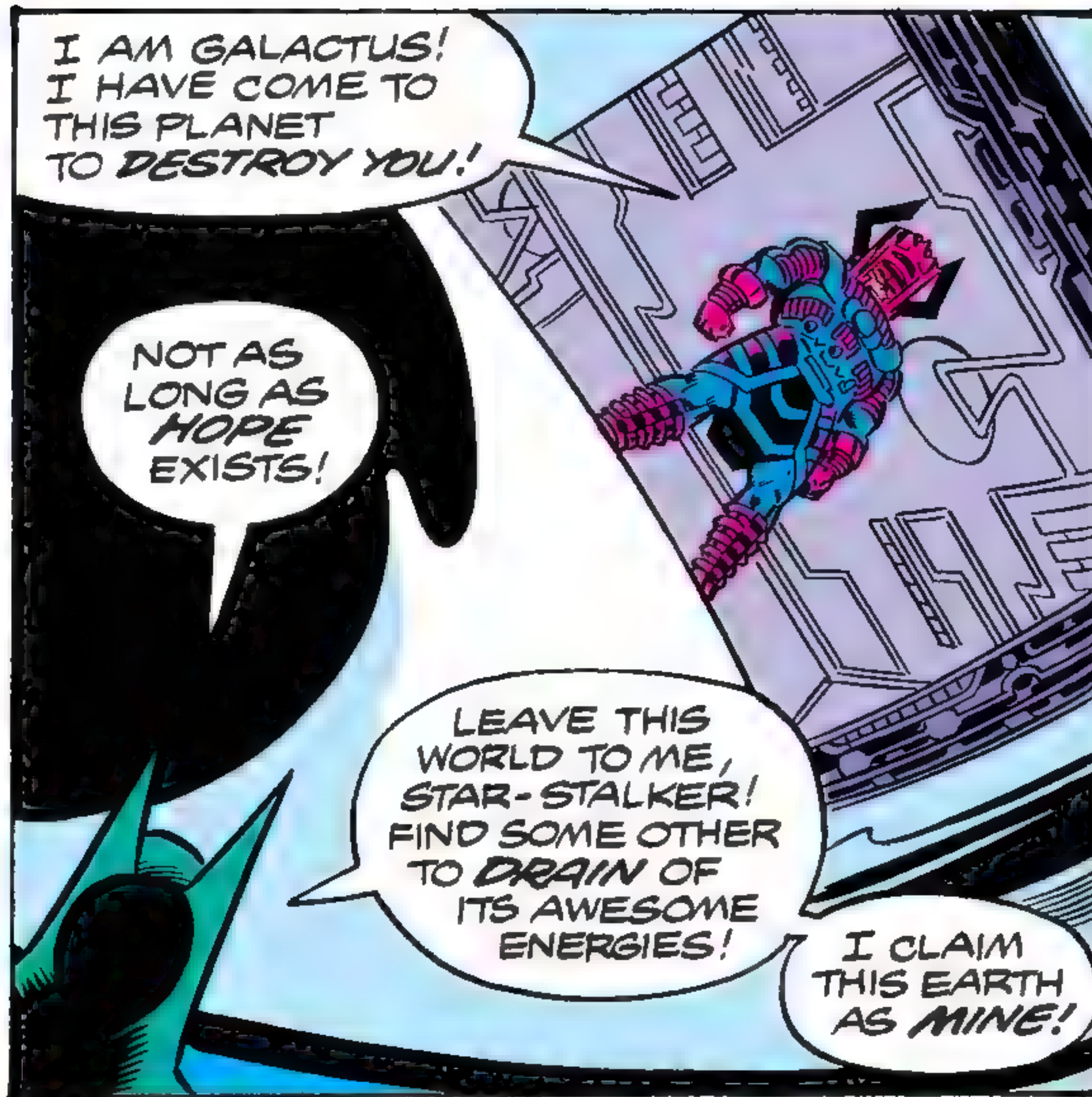




THE STAR-
SPANNING
SHIP LANDS
ONCE MORE.

SOON, THE
GREAT SILVER
DOOR SHALL
SLIDE OPEN
AND REVEAL--

-- HE WHO FEEDS
UPON THE STARS
THEMSELVES!

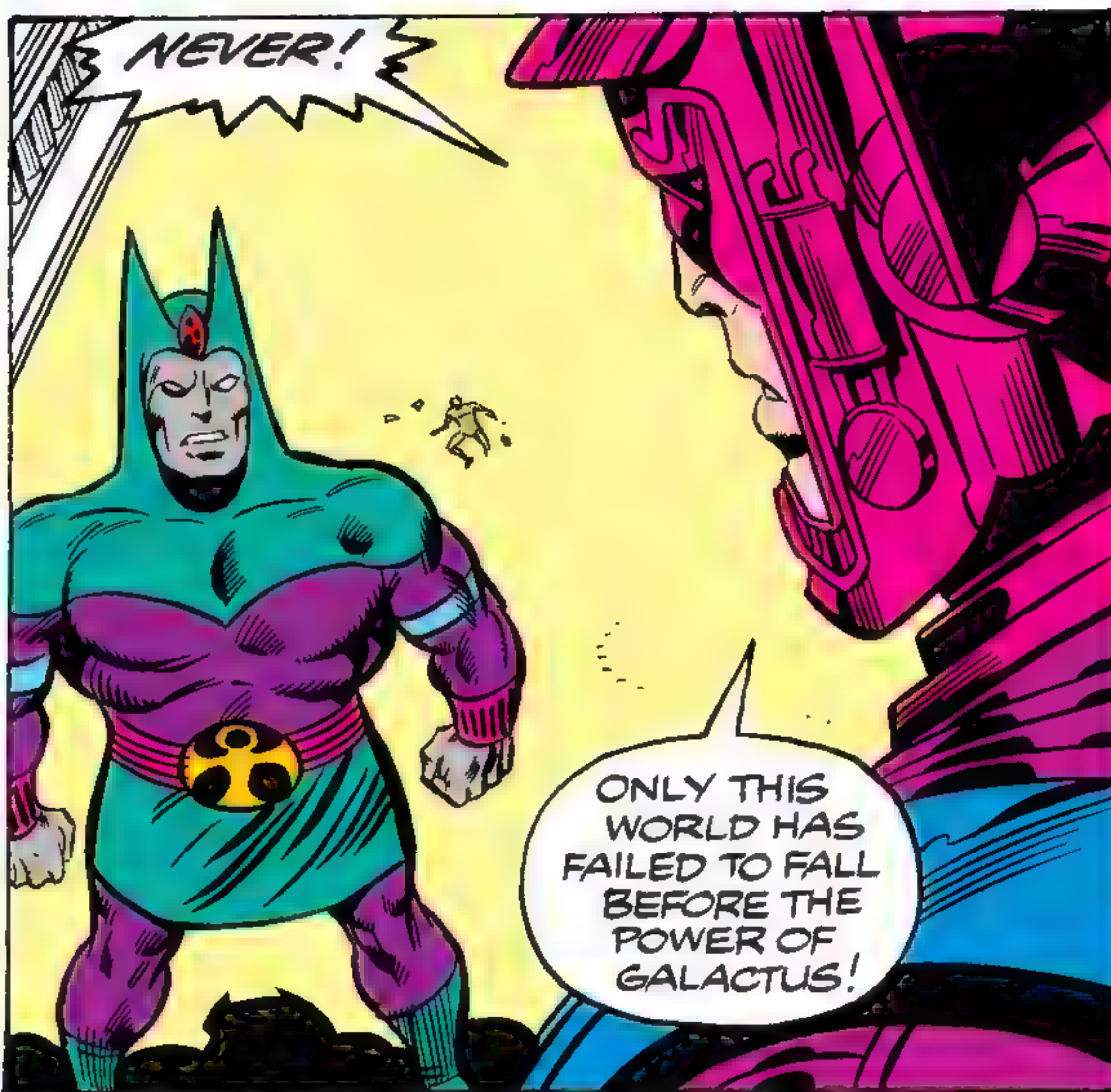


I AM GALACTUS!
I HAVE COME TO
THIS PLANET
TO DESTROY YOU!

NOT AS
LONG AS
HOPE
EXISTS!

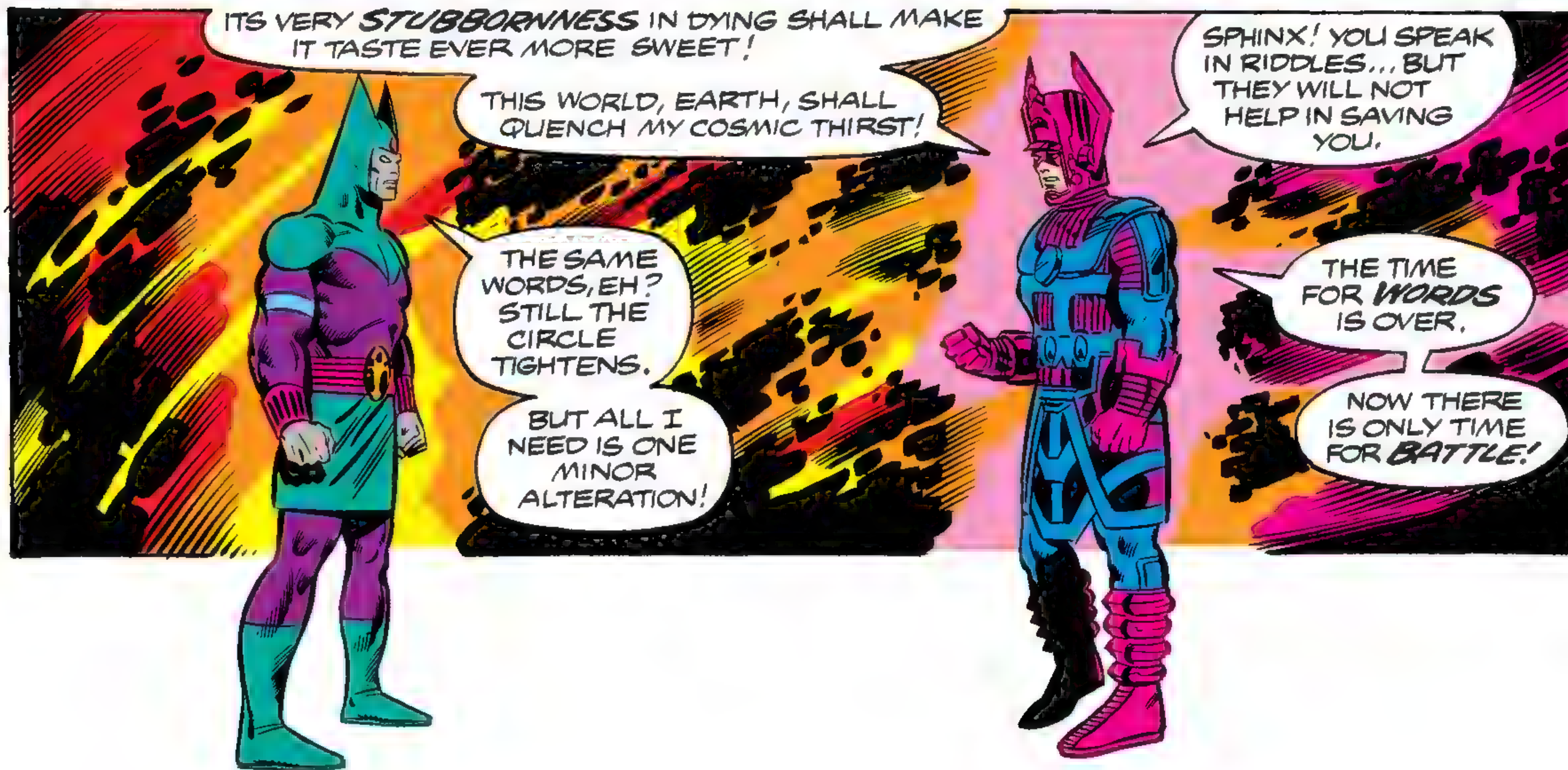
LEAVE THIS
WORLD TO ME,
STAR-STALKER!
FIND SOME OTHER
TO DRAIN OF
ITS AWESOME
ENERGIES!

I CLAIM
THIS EARTH
AS MINE!



NEVER!

ONLY THIS
WORLD HAS
FAILED TO FALL
BEFORE THE
POWER OF
GALACTUS!



ITS VERY *STUBBORNNESS* IN DYING SHALL MAKE
IT TASTE EVER MORE SWEET!

THIS WORLD, EARTH, SHALL
QUENCH MY COSMIC THIRST!

THE SAME
WORDS, EH?
STILL THE
CIRCLE
TIGHTENS.

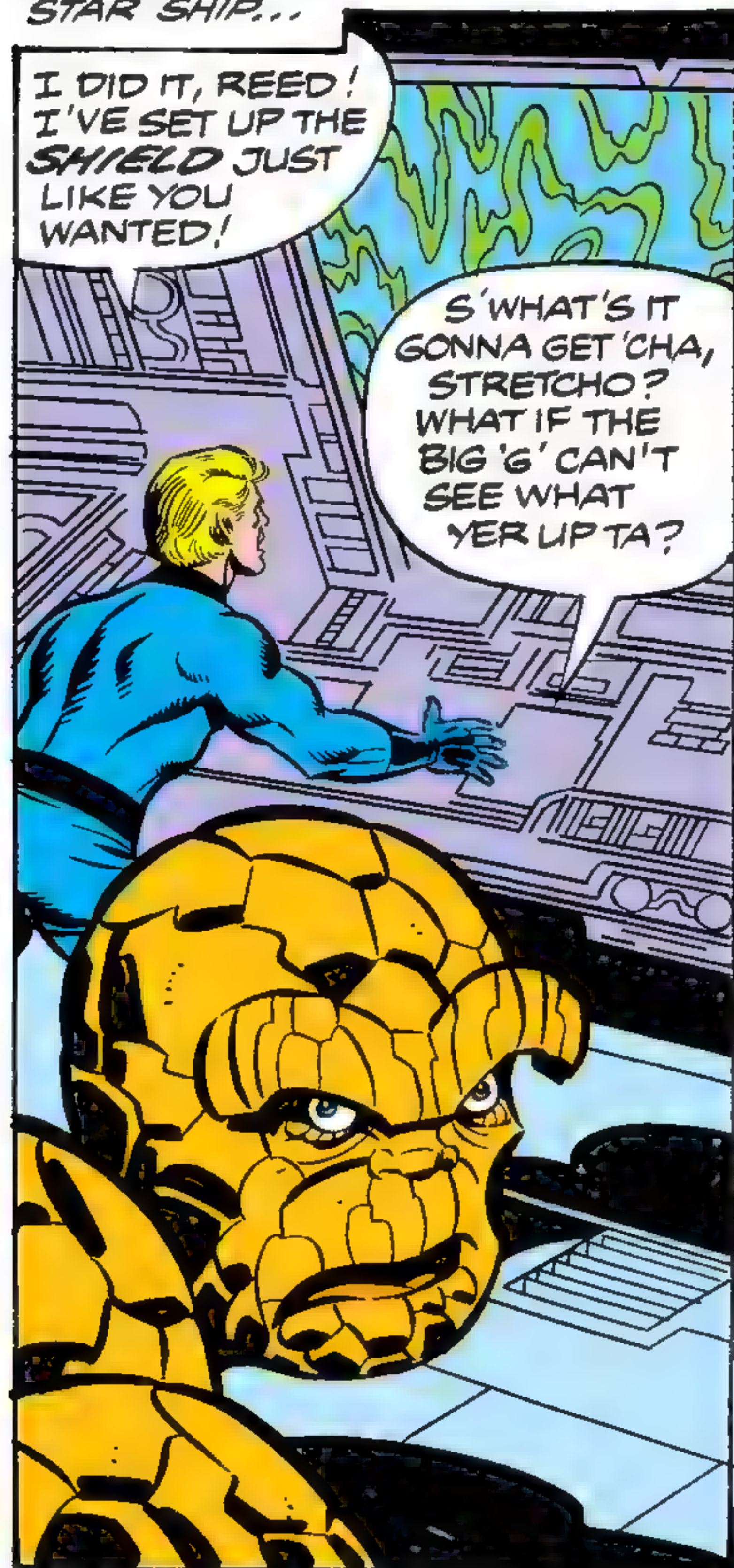
BUT ALL I
NEED IS ONE
MINOR
ALTERATION!

SPHINX! YOU SPEAK
IN RIDDLES... BUT
THEY WILL NOT
HELP IN SAVING
YOU.

THE TIME
FOR *WORDS*
IS OVER.

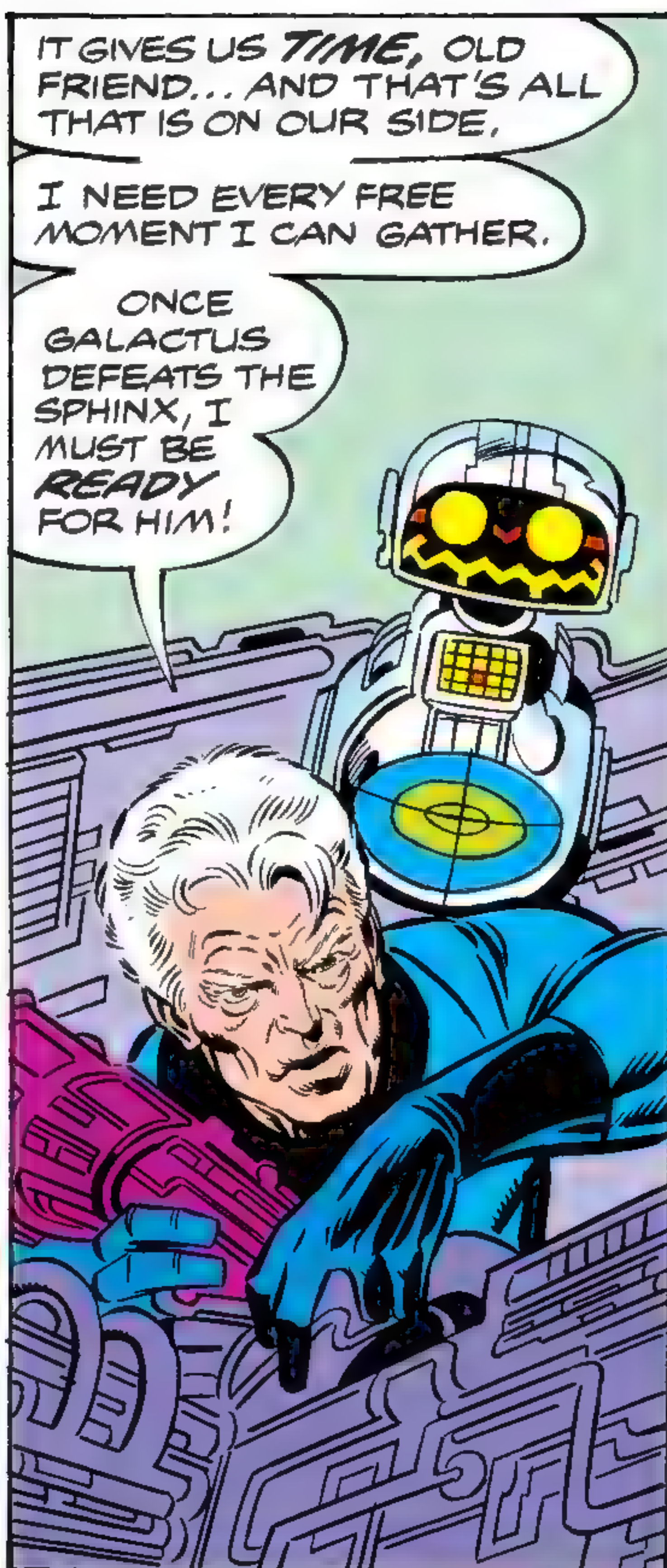
NOW THERE
IS ONLY TIME
FOR *BATTLE*!

MEANWHILE, WITHIN GALACTUS' STAR SHIP...



I DID IT, REED!
I'VE SET UP THE
SHIELD JUST
LIKE YOU
WANTED!

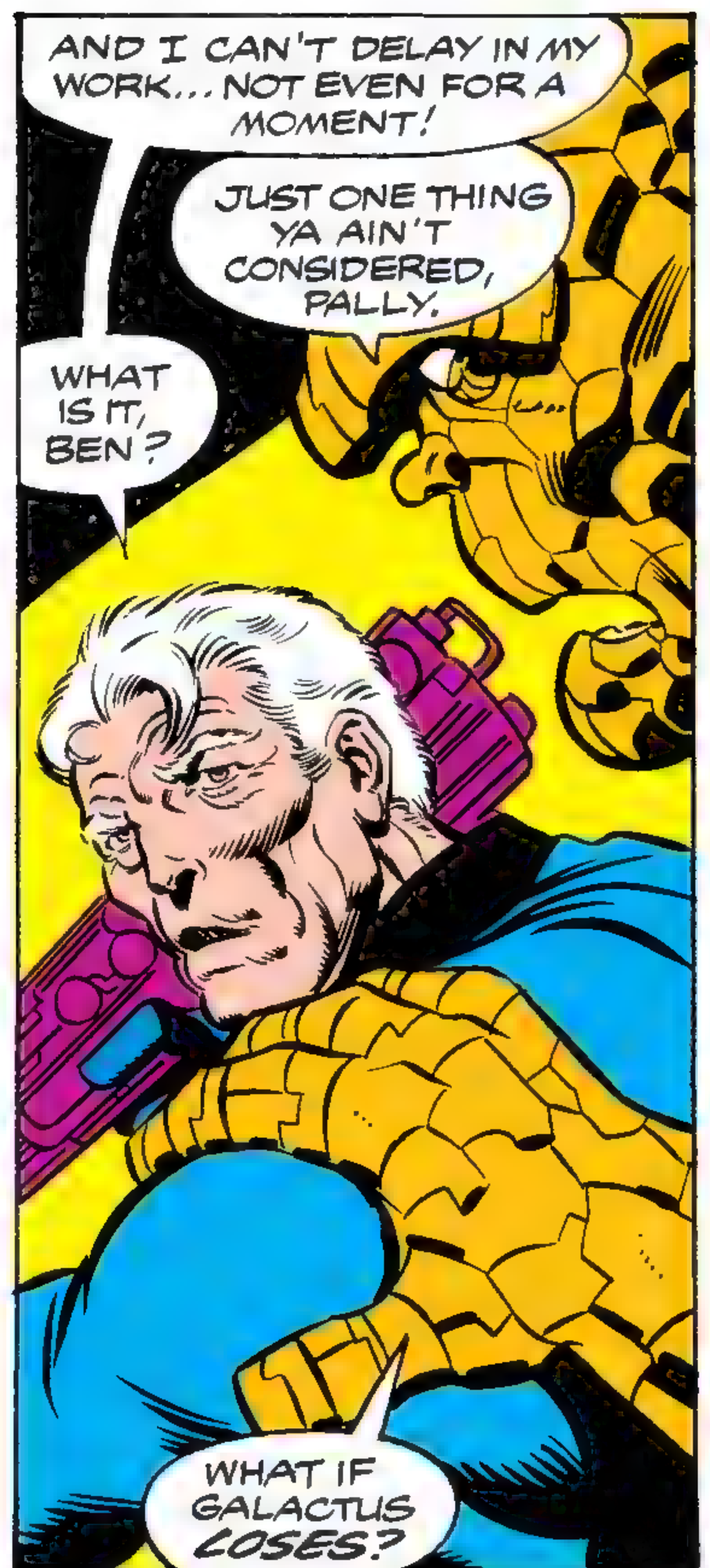
S'WHAT'S IT
GONNA GET 'CHA,
STRETCHO?
WHAT IF THE
BIG 'G' CAN'T
SEE WHAT
YER UP TA?



IT GIVES US *TIME*, OLD
FRIEND... AND THAT'S ALL
THAT IS ON OUR SIDE.

I NEED EVERY FREE
MOMENT I CAN GATHER.

ONCE
GALACTUS
DEFEATS THE
SPHINX, I
MUST BE
READY
FOR HIM!



AND I CAN'T DELAY IN MY
WORK... NOT EVEN FOR A
MOMENT!

JUST ONE THING
YA AIN'T
CONSIDERED,
PALLY.

WHAT
IS IT,
BEN?

WHAT IF
GALACTUS
LOSES?



SUDDENLY...

WHETHER MY
MASTER DESTROYS
THE SPHINX OR DIES
IN THE TRYING, I
SWEAR THERE SHALL
BE **ONE**
CERTAINTY:

**TERRAX SHALL
DESTROY YOU!**

AND HE SHALL DESTROY
YOU--**NOW!**

**NEXT
ISSUE: RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX!**

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

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COMICS GROUP

FANTASTIC FOUR®



TO
THE DEATH!

BYRNE & SINNOTT

Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**

MARV WOLFGMAN / JOHN BYRNE & JOE SINNOTT / J. COSTANZA / BEN SEAN / J. SHOOTER
script / edits illustrations letters colors con. edits.

EXPLANATIONS: A: THE WORLD-DEVOURING GALACTUS IS ABOUT TO ENGAGE IN A WINNER-TAKE-ALL STRUGGLE WITH THE POWER-MAD SPHINX. THE PRIZE: THE EARTH ITSELF!

B: REED RICHARDS, HIS WIFE, SUE, AND THE ORANGE-SKINNED BEN GRIMM ARE RAPIDLY AGING, THE RESULTS OF THE SKRULL'S METABOLIC BOOSTER.

C: TERRAX, POWERFUL NEW HERALD OF GALACTUS, CONFRONTS THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR ABOARD GALACTUS' STARSHIP. HIS OBJECT: THEIR TOTAL ANNIHILATION.



TERRAX'S DARK EYES GLOW WITH FERAL FIRE. IT WAS DAYS AGO WHEN HIS MASTER, GALACTUS, SENT THE FANTASTIC FOUR TO HIS WORLD TO CAPTURE AND HUMILIATE HIM.

NOW HE WILL CLAIM VENGEANCE FOR THAT HUMILIATION...

HUH? MY SNAZZIEST PUNCH AN'YA AIN'T EVEN BLINKIN'! WHAT GIVES?



DOLT! GALACTUS TRANSFORMED MY BODY TO WITHSTAND THE RIGORS OF SAVAGE SPACE ITSELF.

DO YOU BELIEVE THE BLOW OF AN AGING MONSTROSITY COULD HAVE ANYTHING BUT A GLANCING EFFECT?

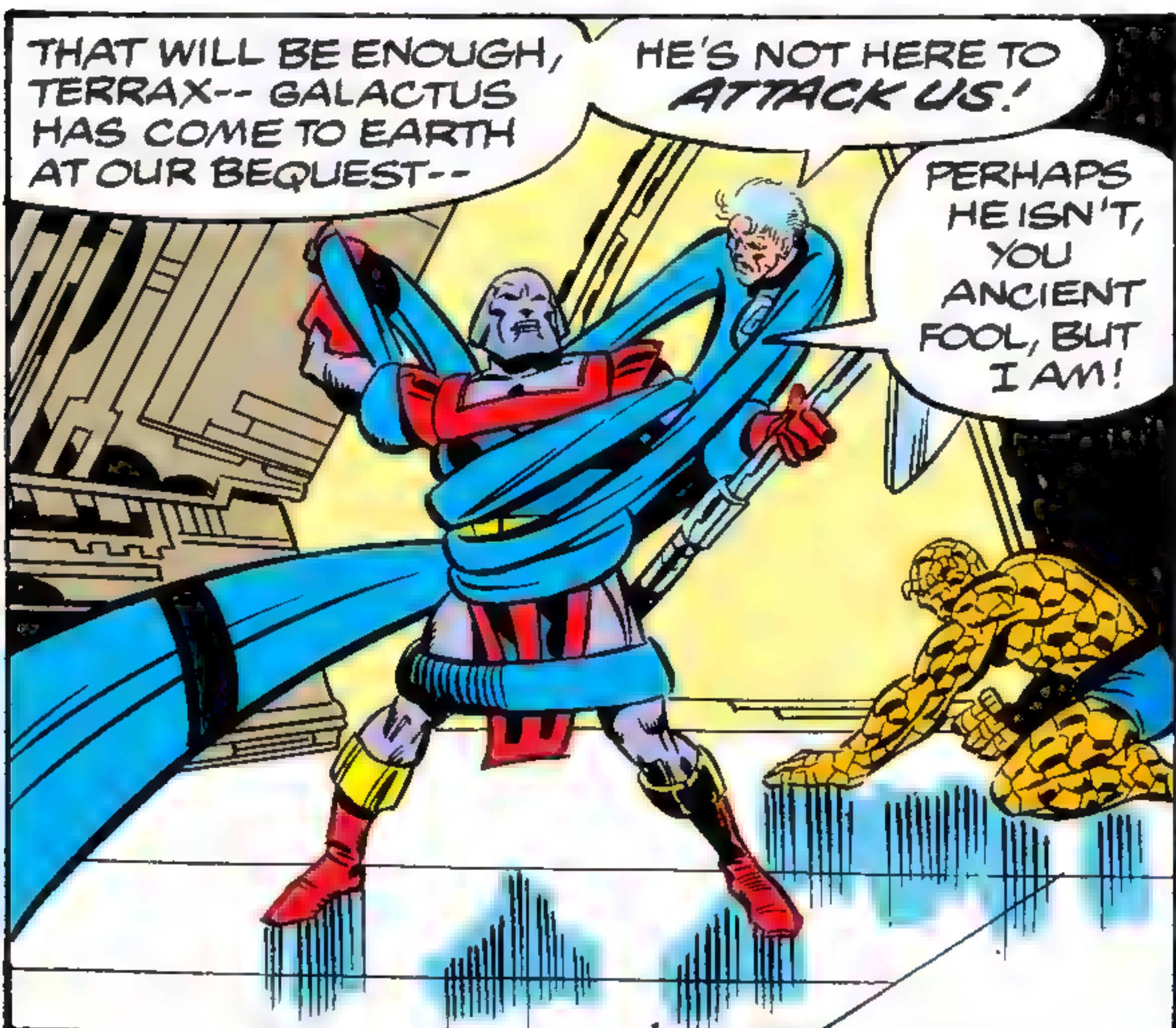


THOUGH WRACKED WITH CRIPPLING PAIN, REED RICHARDS SUDDENLY STRETCHES FORWARD...

THAT WILL BE ENOUGH, TERRAX-- GALACTUS HAS COME TO EARTH AT OUR BEQUEST--

HE'S NOT HERE TO ATTACK US!

PERHAPS HE ISN'T, YOU ANCIENT FOOL, BUT I AM!



I STILL OWE YOU FOR HUMBLING ME BEFORE MY PEOPLE!

AND I MEAN TO PAY YOU BACK FOR THAT DEED-- IN SPADES!



BUT IT WAS YOUR MASTER WHO-- UHH!

BEN AND REED ARE TOO WEAK TO FIGHT YOU, STONEY--

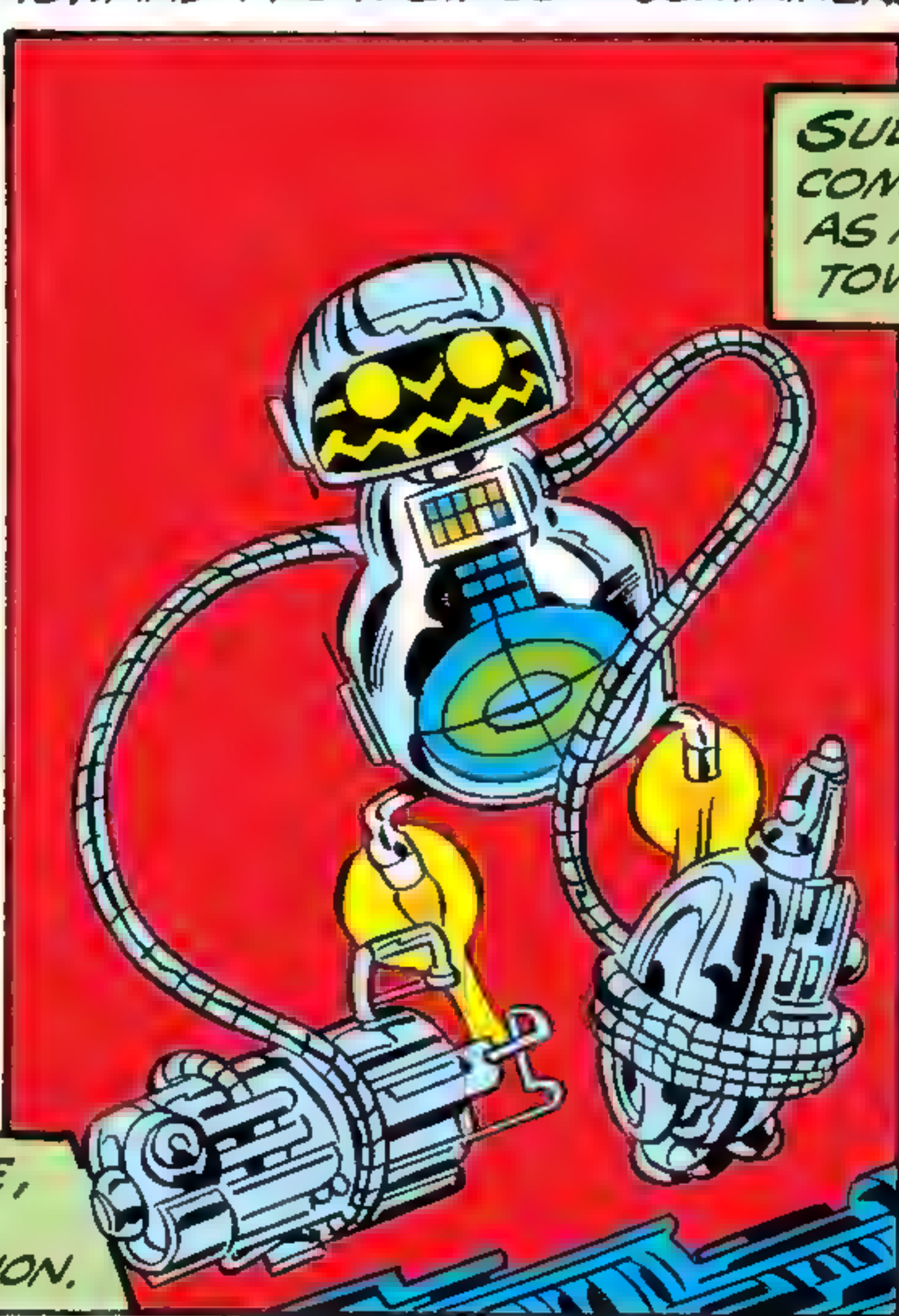
BUT THE HUMAN TORCH IS AS STRONG AS EVER!

LET'S SEE YOU TAKE ON SOMEONE WHO CAN FIGHT BACK!

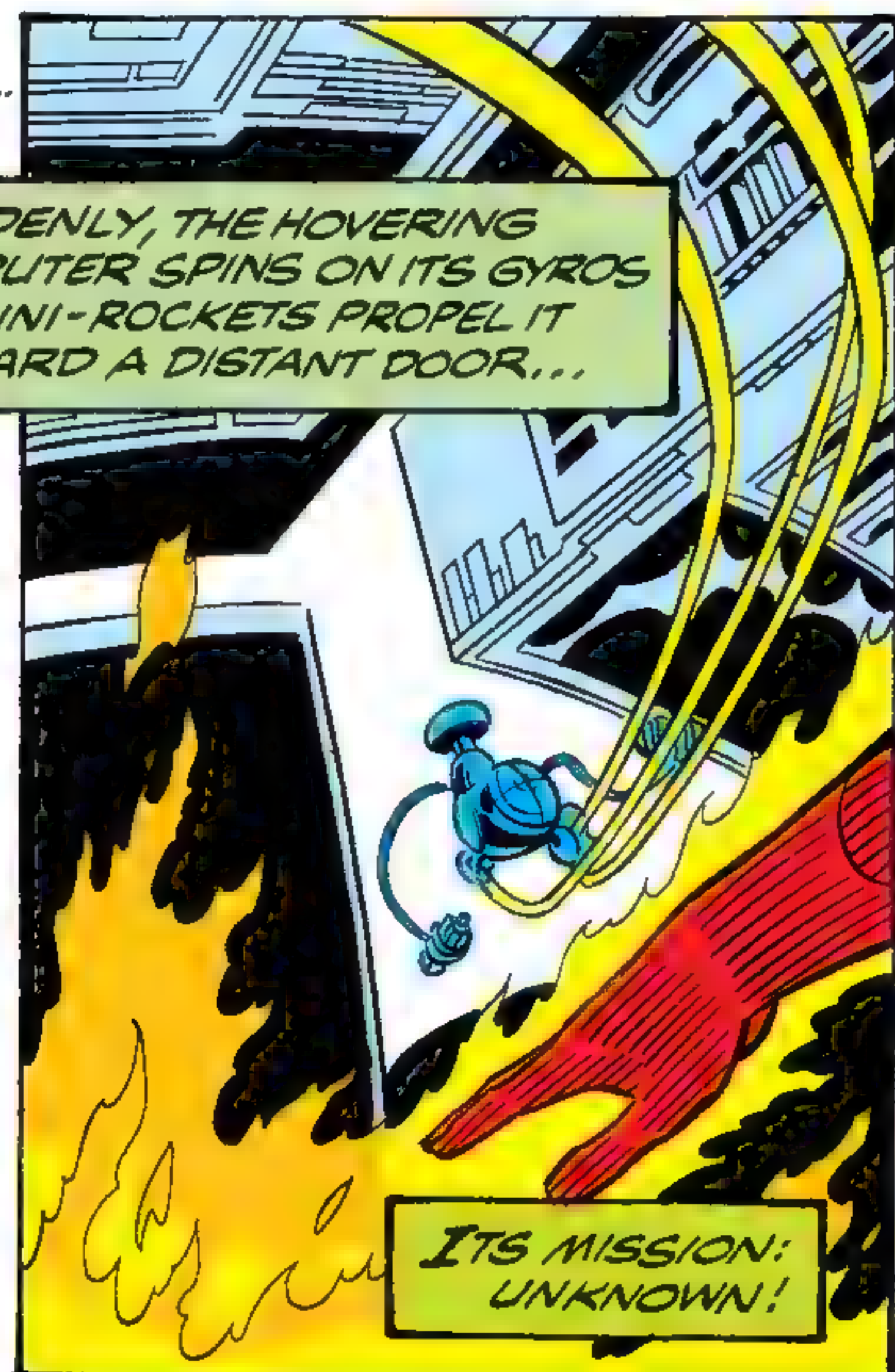


SILENTLY OBSERVING THE RAGING BATTLE, THE SMALL FLOATING MOBILE COMPUTER KNOWN AS HERBIE MAKES A GRIM DECISION.

TWIN STEEL TENDRILS TELESCOPE TOWARD TWO METALLIC CONTAINERS...

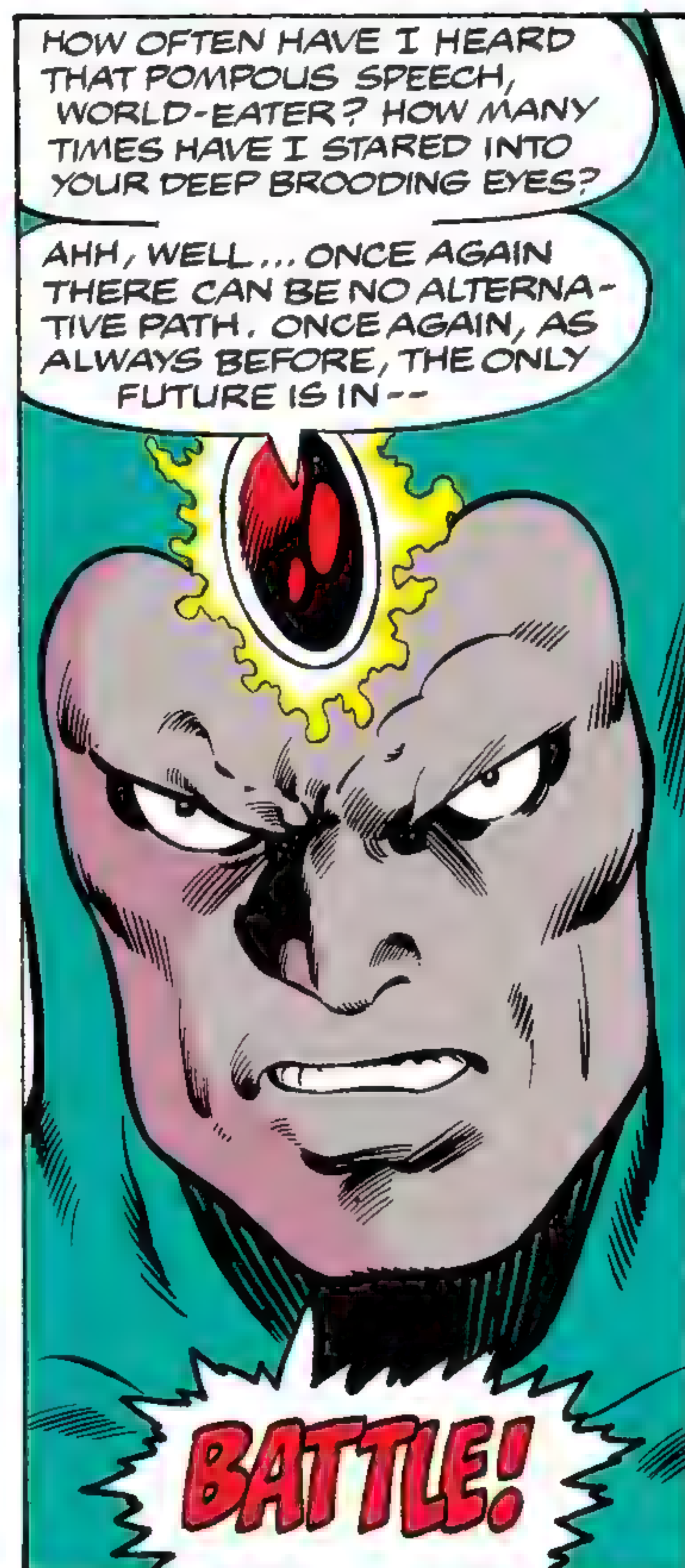
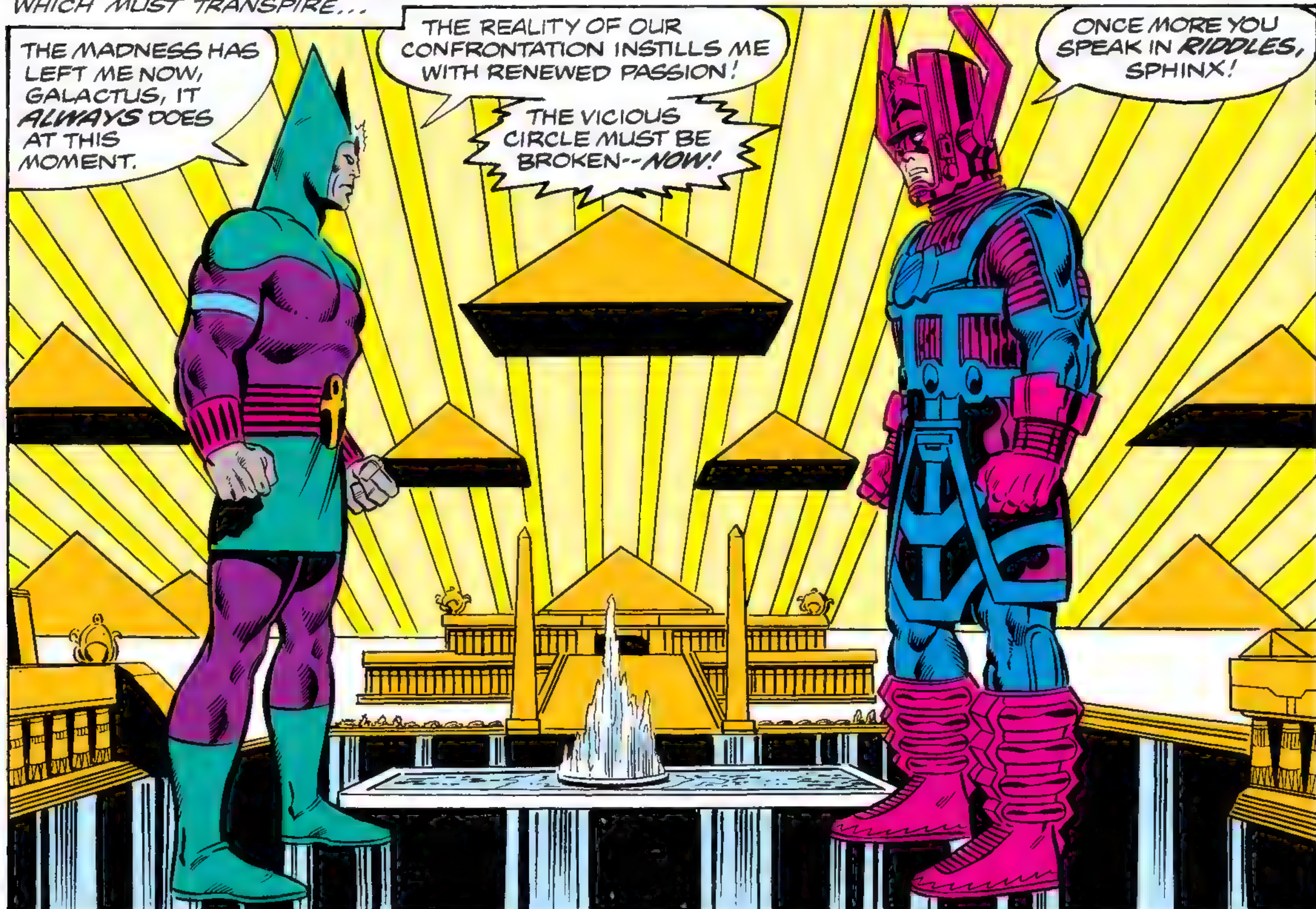


SUDDENLY, THE HOVERING COMPUTER SPINS ON ITS GYROS AS MINI-ROCKETS PROPEL IT TOWARD A DISTANT DOOR...



ITS MISSION: UNKNOWN!

A GRIM TABLEAU: TWO FIGURES STAND TALL AND POWERFUL OVER THE ANCIENT SANDS OF MAJESTIC EGYPT. FLOATING PYRAMIDS, CONSTRUCTED BY THE SOMBER SPHINX HIMSELF LEND AWE TO THE EVENTS WHICH MUST TRANSPIRE...



WORLD-EATER! THIS TIME
THE SPHINX SHALL BE
VICTORIOUS! THIS TIME
YOU SHALL BE FATE'S
POWERLESS PAWN!

BOOM!



*SUDDENLY, THE TRANQUIL SKY ERUPTS IN A
BLAZE OF OMNIPOTENT FURY. AS ONE, THESE TWIN
GODS UNLEASH THEIR INEXTINGUISHABLE POWER.*

NEVER,
BRAGGARD!
I AM
GALACTUS!
I AM
INVINCIBLE.



YOU
WERE
INVINCIBLE!

NO, MY ENIGMATIC FRIEND, I SHALL
REMAIN. MY POWER IS INDIS-
PUTABLE!

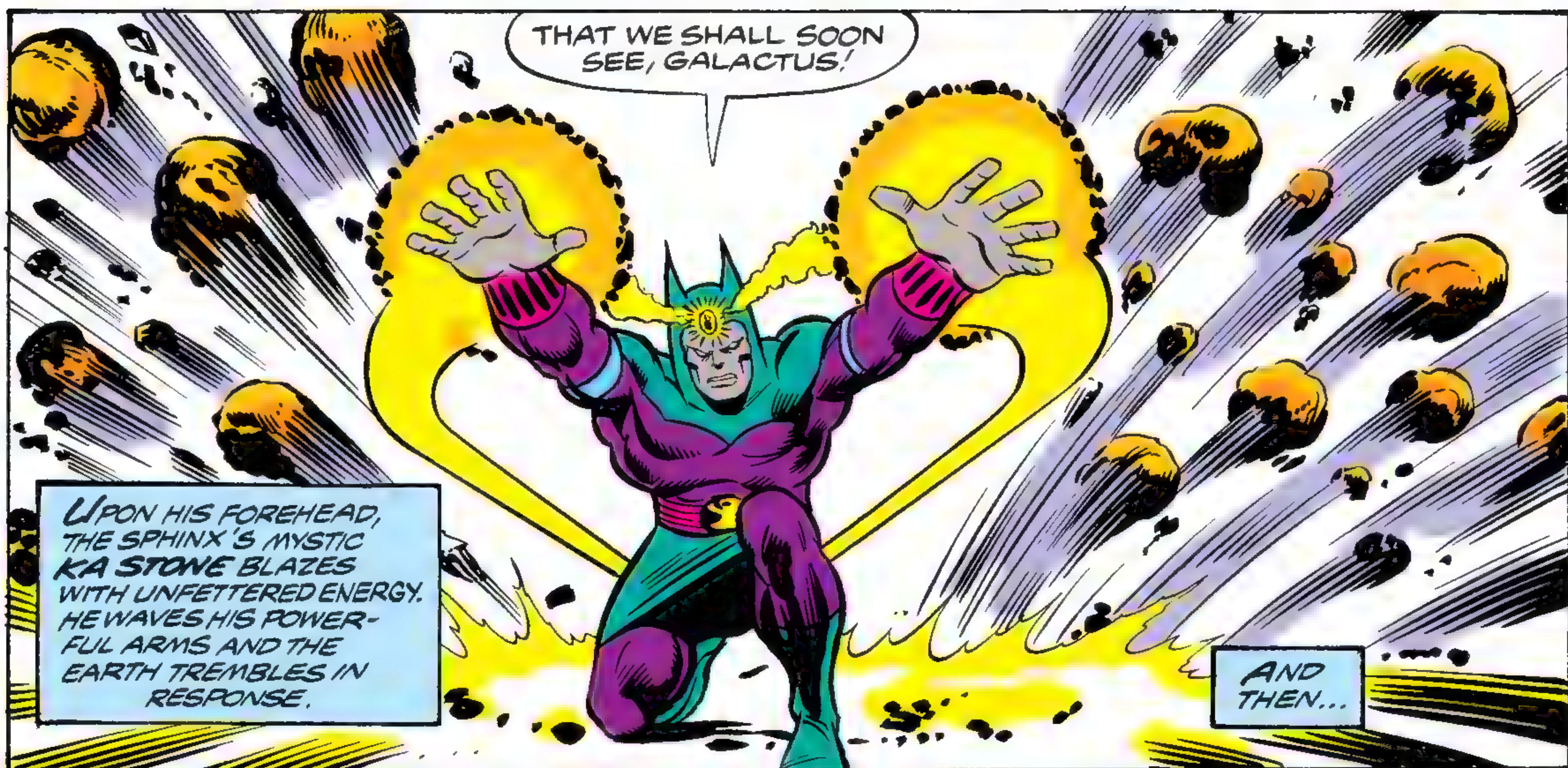
MY WILL IS
TOTAL!



I, WHO HAVE
RAVAGED WORLDS
BEYOND COUNTING
SHALL DEAL WITH
YOU AS IF YOU
WERE A MERE
SPECK!



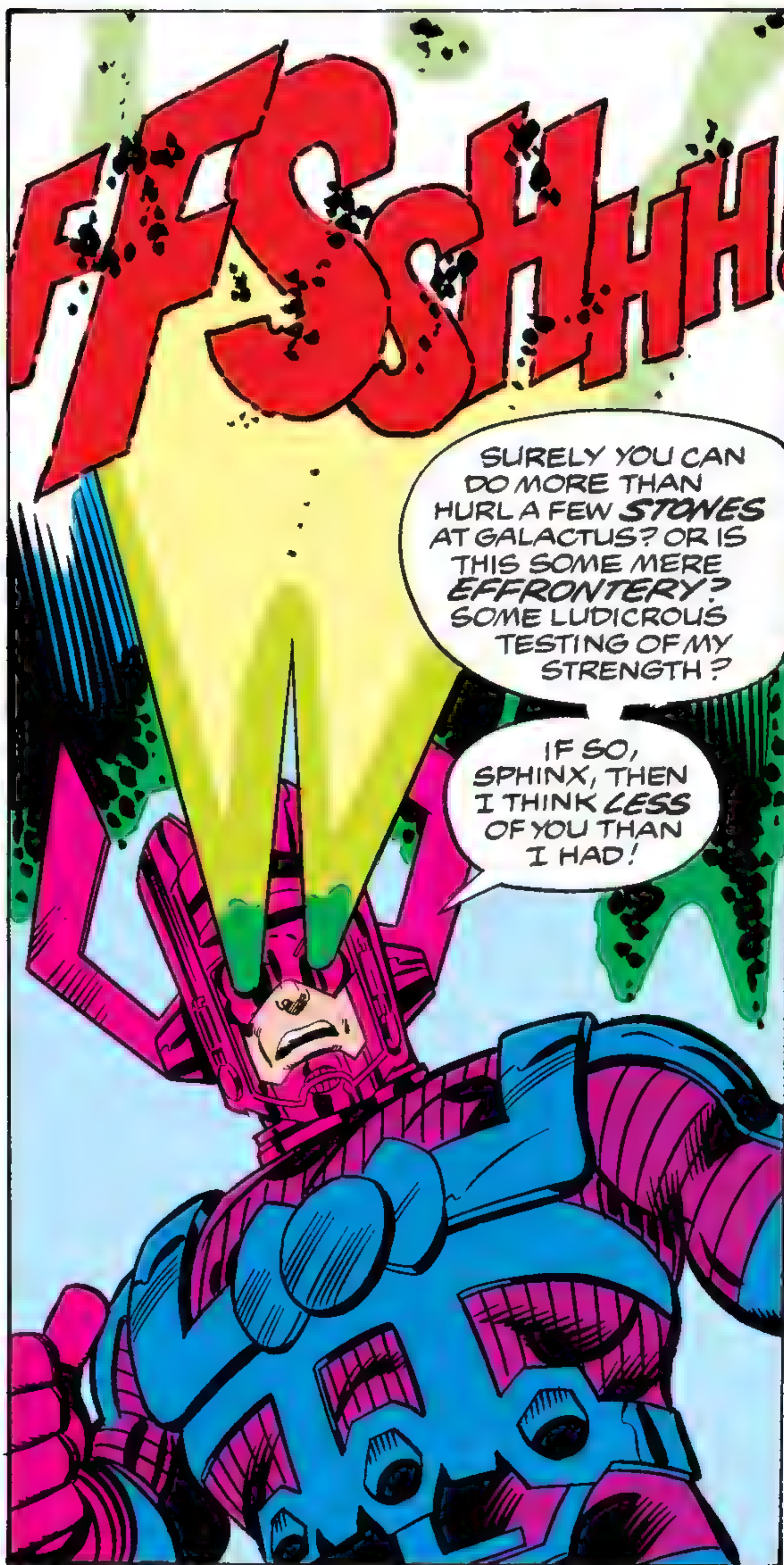
FOR, IN TRUTH,
SPHINX, THAT
IS ALL YOU
REALLY ARE!



THAT WE SHALL SOON
SEE, GALACTUS!

UPON HIS FOREHEAD,
THE SPHINX'S MYSTIC
KA STONE BLAZES
WITH UNFETTERED ENERGY.
HE WAVES HIS POWER-
FUL ARMS AND THE
EARTH TREMBLES IN
RESPONSE.

AND
THEN...



SURELY YOU CAN
DO MORE THAN
HURL A FEW **STONES**
AT GALACTUS? OR IS
THIS SOME MERE
EFFRONTERY?
SOME LUDICROUS
TESTING OF MY
STRENGTH?

IF SO,
SPHINX, THEN
I THINK **LESS**
OF YOU THAN
I HAD!

THE GROUND BENEATH GALACTUS' FEET BOILS
AND HEAVES. THEN, IN A BLINDING FLASH OF
CORUSCATING LIGHT AND FIRE, IT **VANISHES...**

NO, GALACTUS,
THAT ATTACK
WAS A MERE
DIVERSION!

BEHOLD MY
TERRIBLE POWER!
BEHOLD THE FURY
OF MY KA STONE!

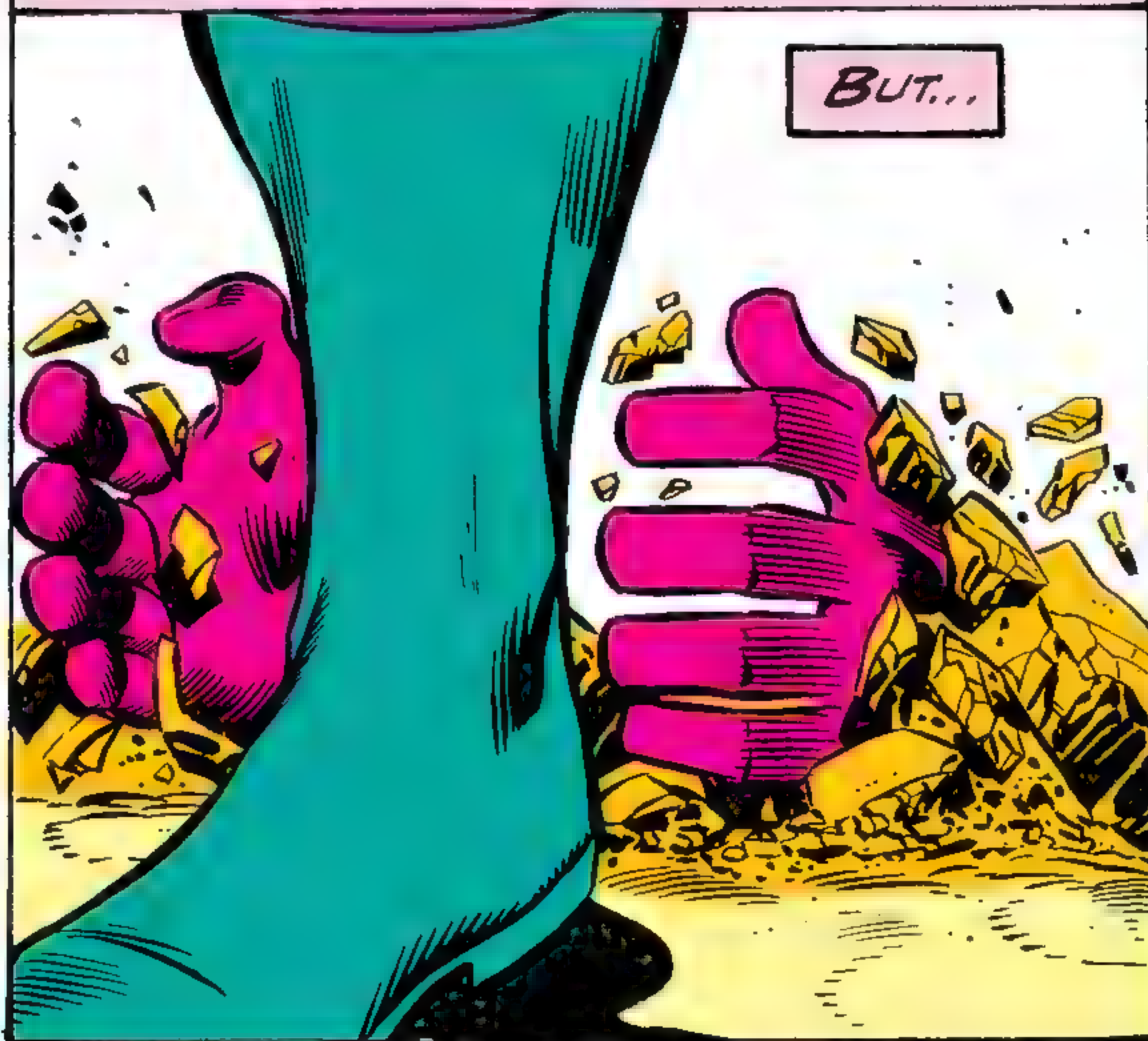


SILENCE RECLAIMS THE ACRID
DESERT LAND AS ONE TALL
FIGURE STANDS PROUD, STARING
INTO THE DEEP, DARK TUNNEL
WHICH STRETCHES BEFORE HIM
LIKE SOME VORACIOUS EBON
MAW...



THE EARTH HAS SWALLOWED UP GALACTUS, AND
THE SPHINX SURVEYS HIS SINISTER HANDIWORK...

BUT...



DO NOT
STAND SO
HAUGHTILY,
SPHINX!

MERE
BURIAL IS
NOT ENOUGH
TO KEEP
DOWN
GALACTUS!

WHAT?

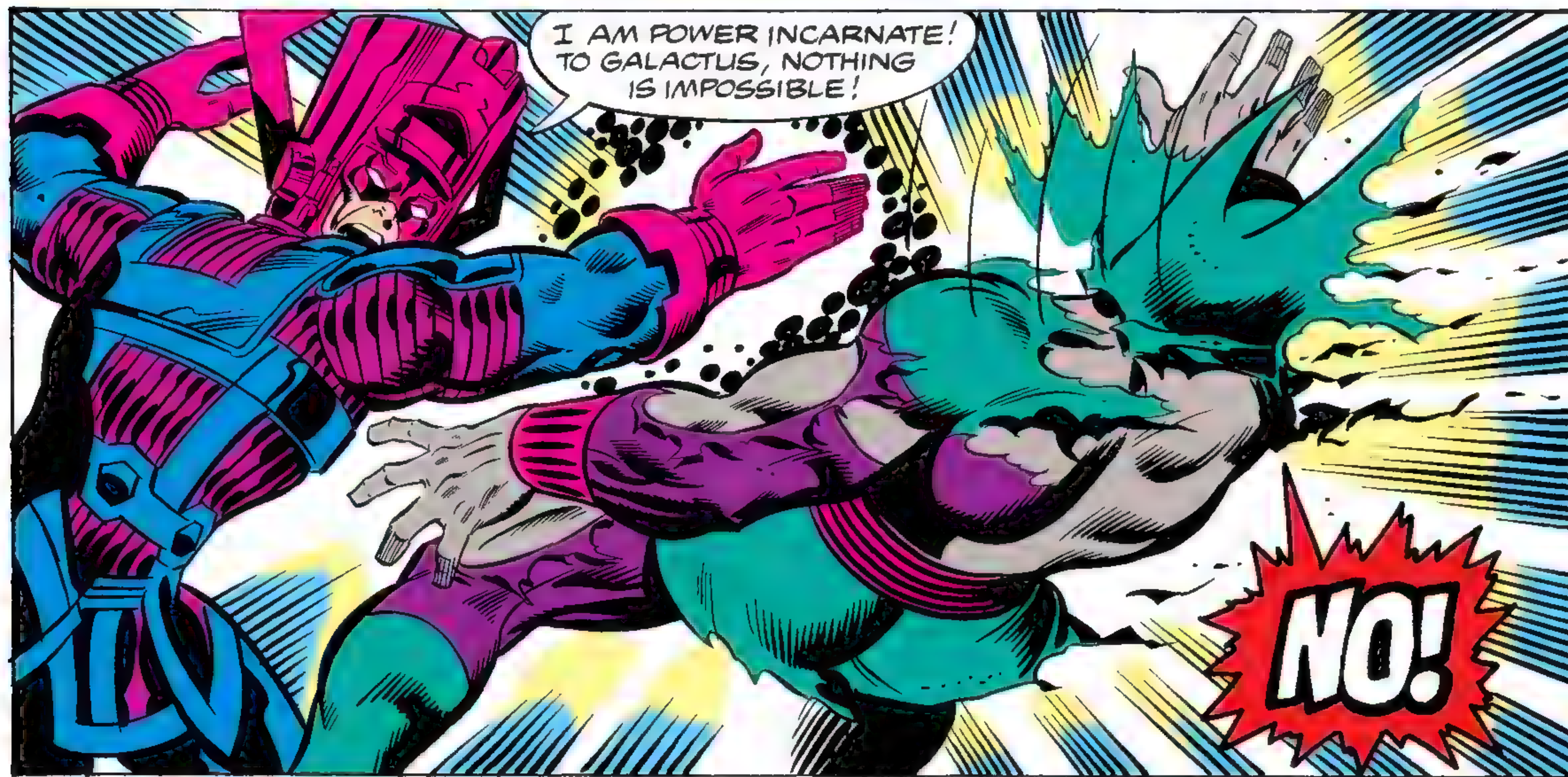
HOW MANY
TIMES CAN YOU
FREE YOURSELF
FROM MY TRAPS?

AS OFTEN
AS I MUST.



I AM POWER INCARNATE!
TO GALACTUS, NOTHING
IS IMPOSSIBLE!

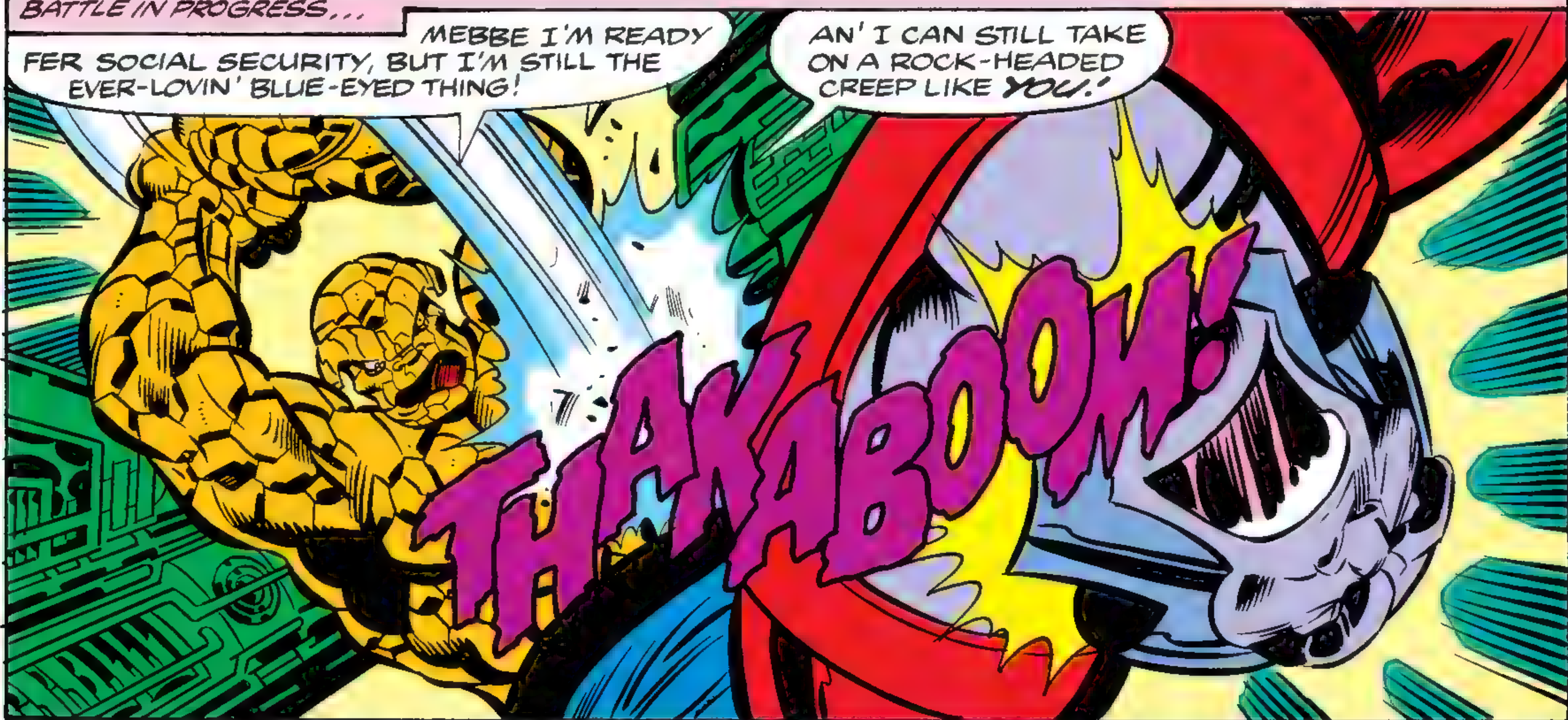
NO!



AS THE SPHINX'S ANGUISHED SCREAM ECHOES FOR MILES IN EVERY DIRECTION, WE REJOIN ANOTHER BATTLE IN PROGRESS...

MEBBE I'M READY FER SOCIAL SECURITY, BUT I'M STILL THE EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED THING!

AN' I CAN STILL TAKE ON A ROCK-HEADED CREEP LIKE YOU!



YOU DID IT, BEN-- YOU MADE HIM DROP HIS AXE!

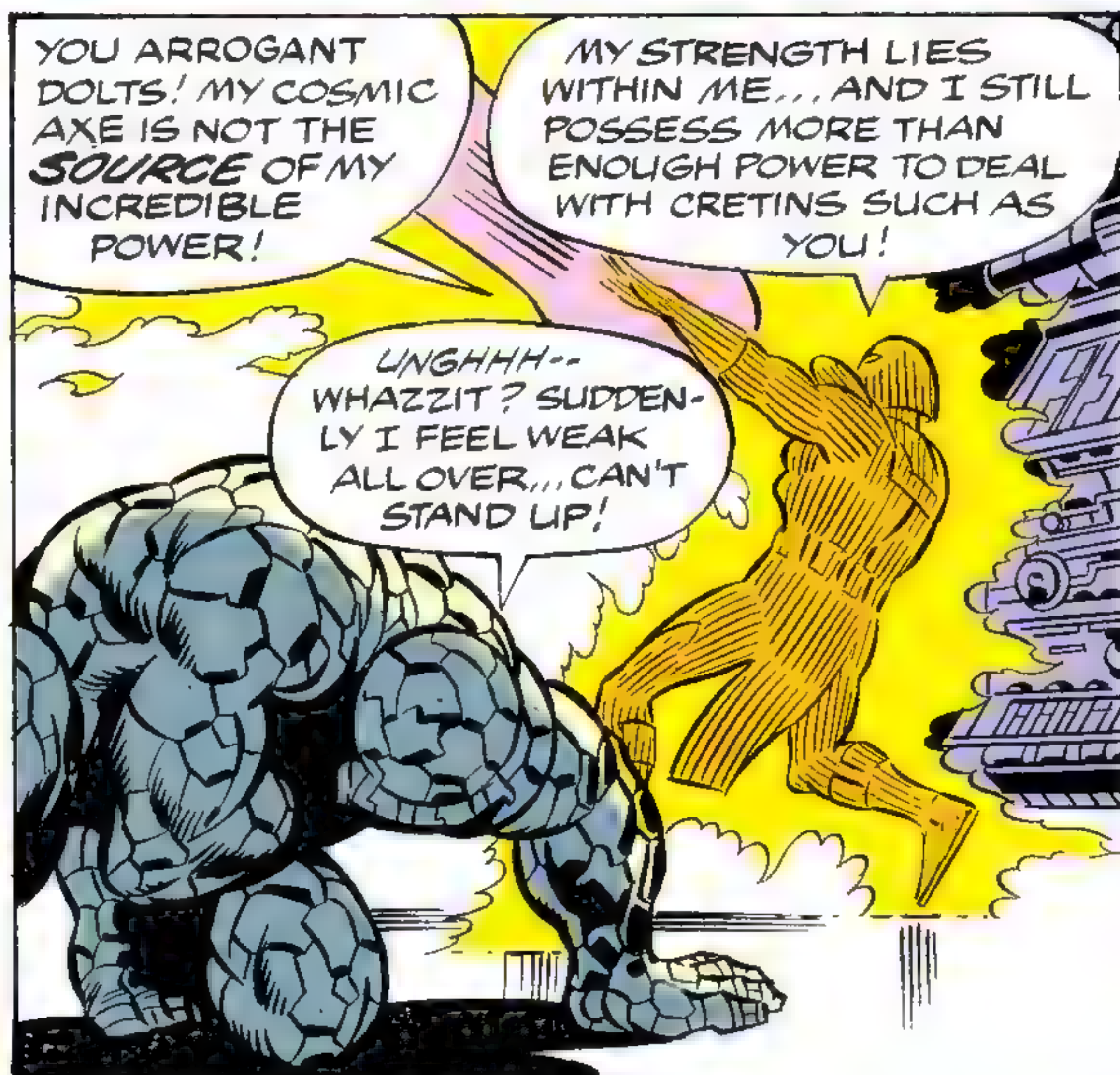
LEAVE THE REST UP TO YOURS TRULY!



YOU ARROGANT DOLTS! MY COSMIC AXE IS NOT THE SOURCE OF MY INCREDIBLE POWER!

MY STRENGTH LIES WITHIN ME... AND I STILL POSSESS MORE THAN ENOUGH POWER TO DEAL WITH CRETINS SUCH AS YOU!

UNGHHH-- WHAZZIT? SUDDENLY I FEEL WEAK ALL OVER... CAN'T STAND UP!



BEN!

GOOD LORD! THAT LAST ATTACK ON TERRAX MUST HAVE DONE HIM IN!



STRETCHO... IT'S TOO LATE, I AIN'T GOT THE STUFF TA KEEP ME GOIN'!

NO, BEN... DON'T SAY IT... DON'T EVEN THINK IT!

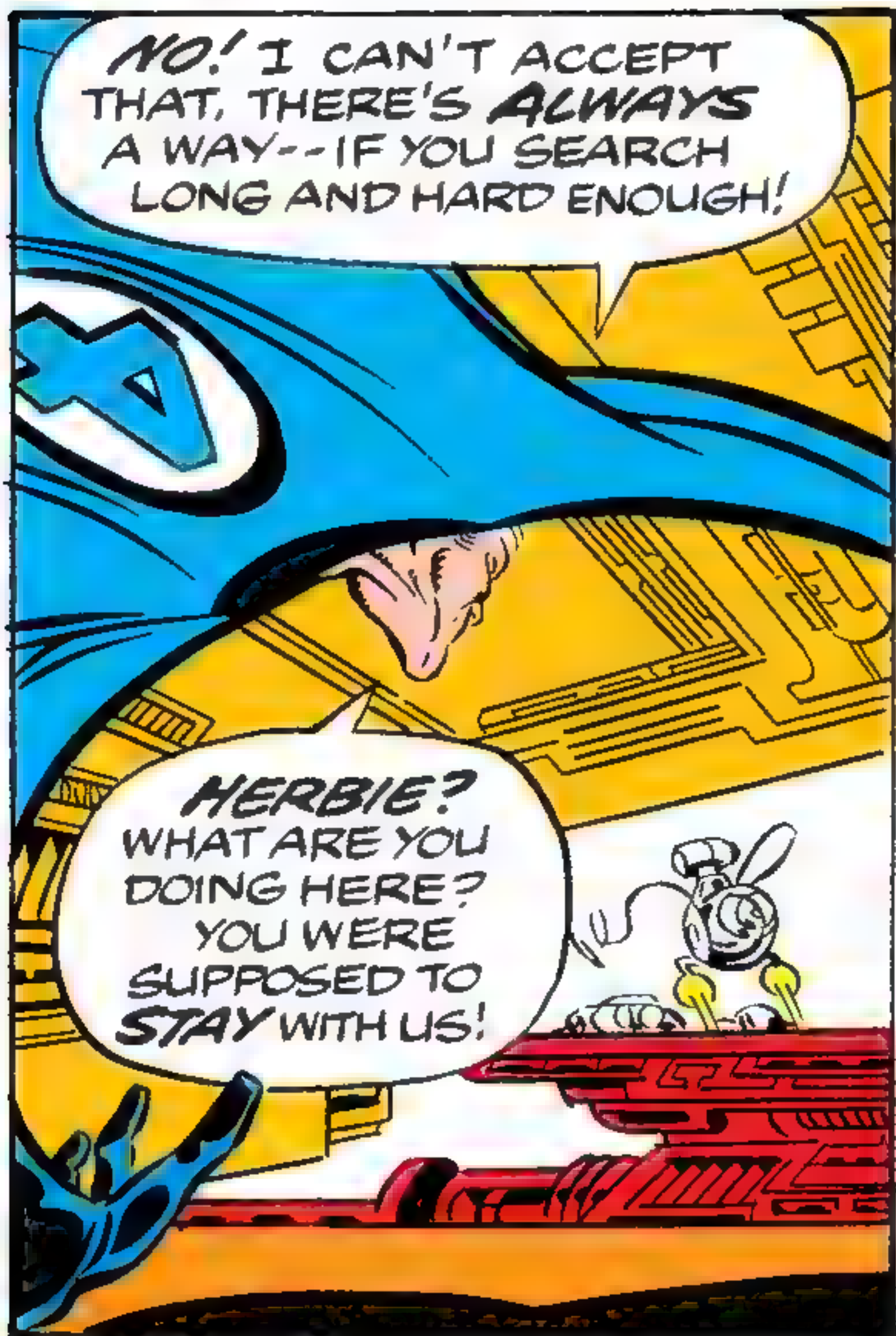


YOU'LL PULL THROUGH... WE ALL WILL!

AM I FOOLING MYSELF? ARE WE ALL DONE FOR?

IS THERE NO WAY OUT OF THIS FINAL, DEADLY TRAP?





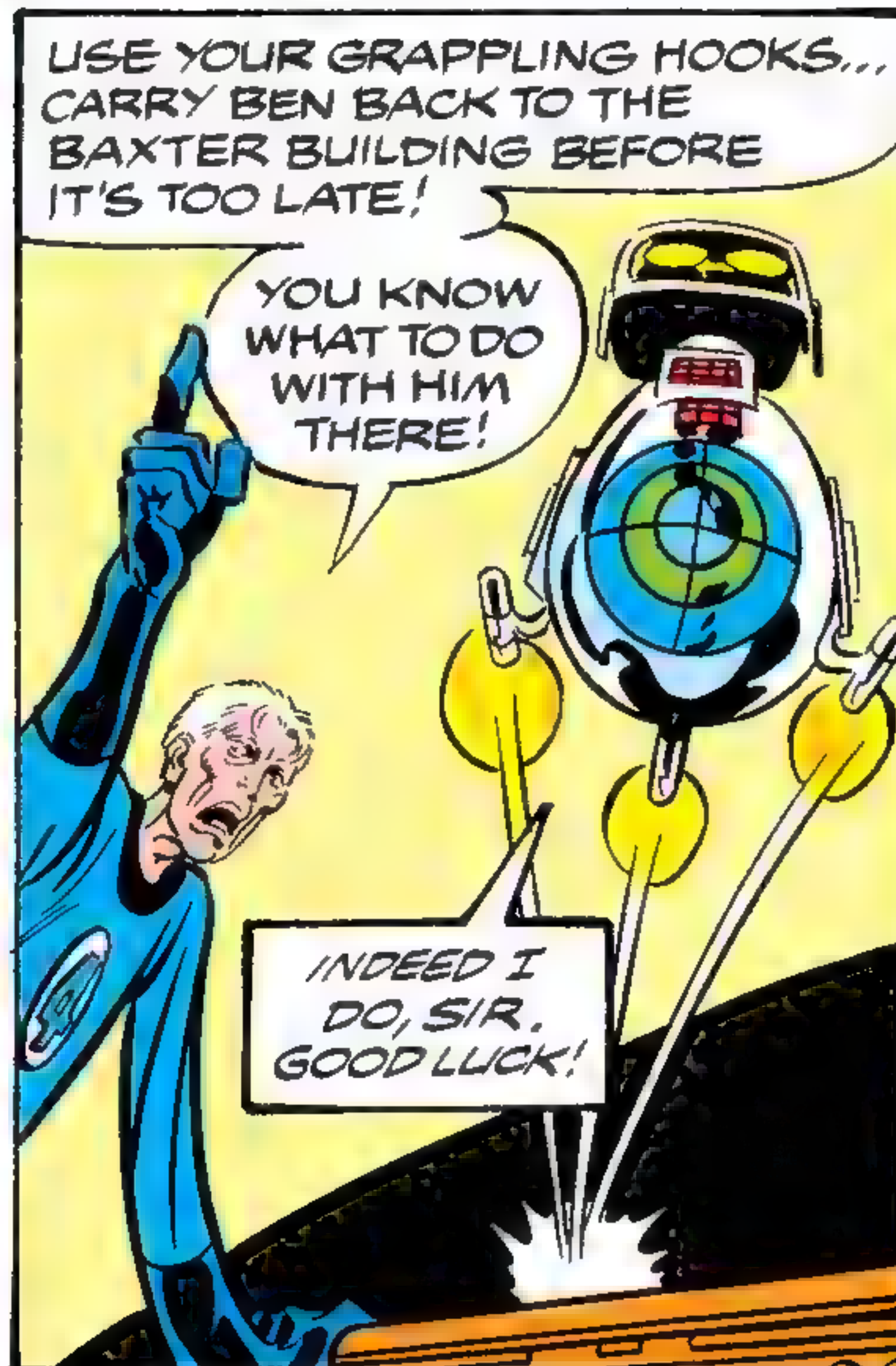
NO! I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT, THERE'S **ALWAYS** A WAY--IF YOU SEARCH LONG AND HARD ENOUGH!

HERBIE? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO **STAY** WITH US!



SORRY, SIR, I WAS COM-
PLETING WORK ON THIS DEVICE
YOU BEGAN, I THOUGHT--

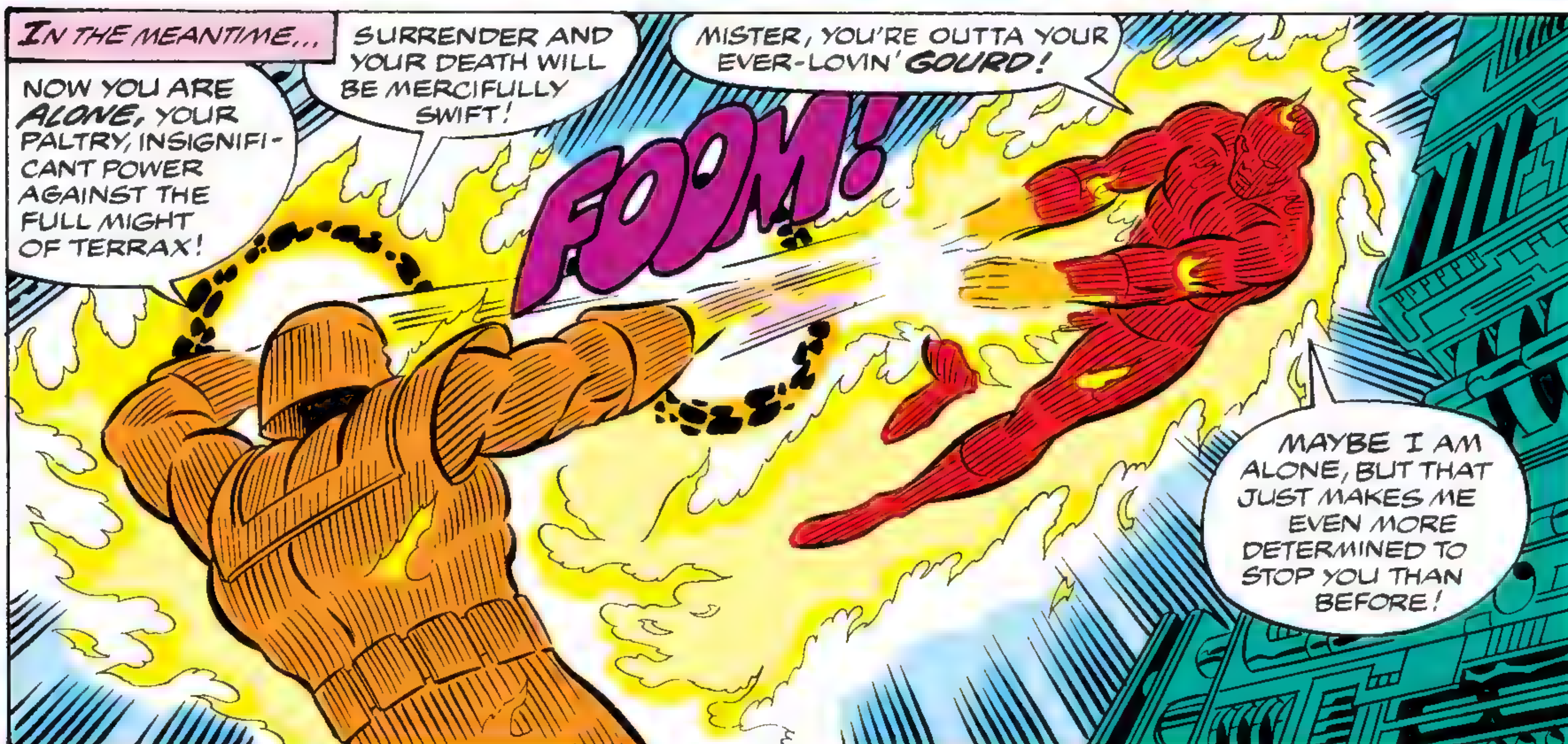
THERE'S
NO TIME
FOR THAT--
I NEED
YOU NOW.



USE YOUR GRAPPLING HOOKS...
CARRY BEN BACK TO THE
BAXTER BUILDING BEFORE
IT'S TOO LATE!

YOU KNOW
WHAT TO DO
WITH HIM
THERE!

INDEED I
DO, SIR.
GOOD LUCK!



IN THE MEANTIME...

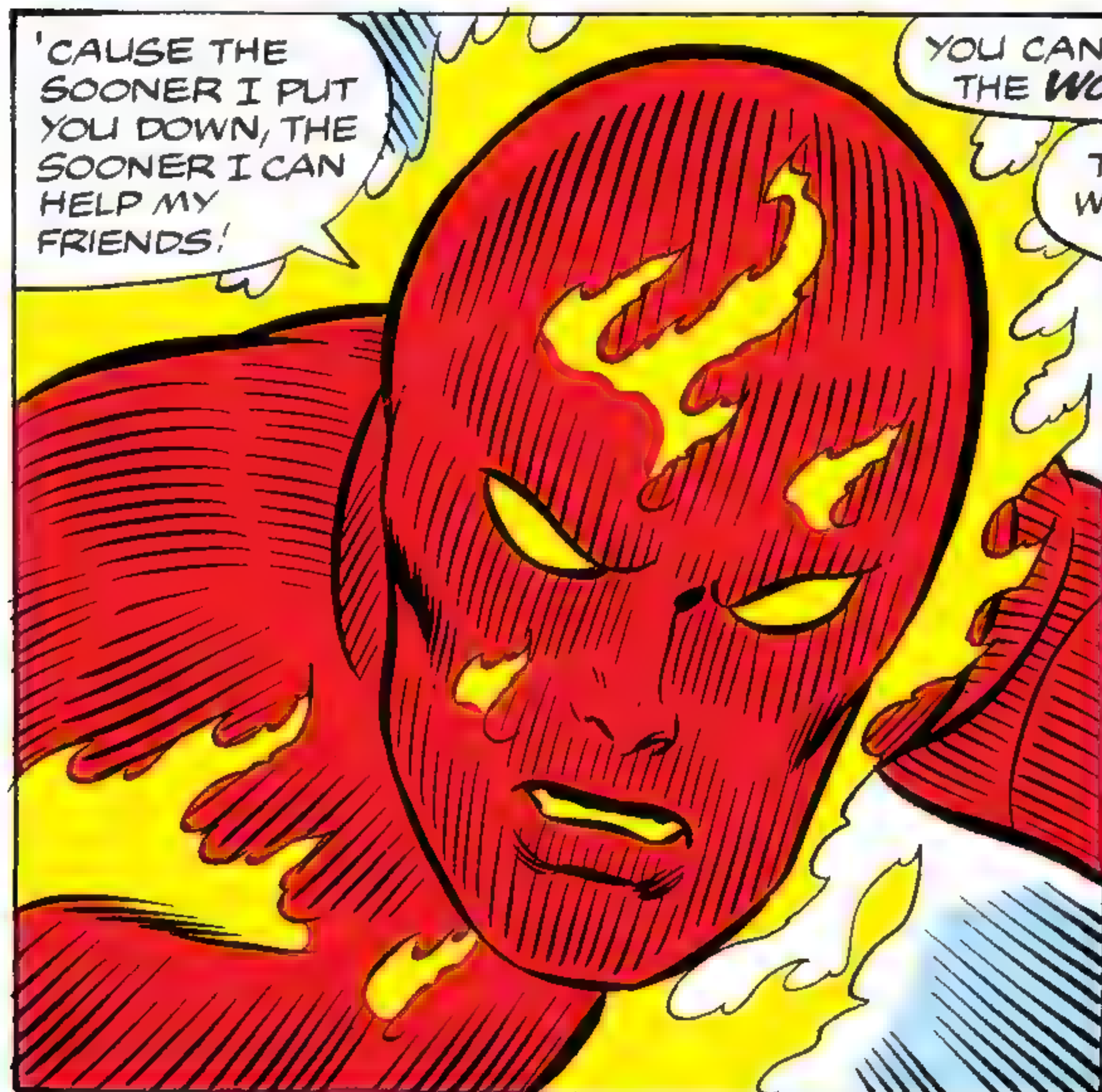
NOW YOU ARE
ALONE, YOUR
PALTRY, INSIGNIFI-
CANT POWER
AGAINST THE
FULL MIGHT
OF TERRAX!

SURRENDER AND
YOUR DEATH WILL
BE MERCIFULLY
SWIFT!

MISTER, YOU'RE OUTTA YOUR
EVER-LOVIN' **GOURD**!

FOOM!

MAYBE I AM
ALONE, BUT THAT
JUST MAKES ME
EVEN MORE
DETERMINED TO
STOP YOU THAN
BEFORE!



'CAUSE THE
SOONER I PUT
YOU DOWN, THE
SOONER I CAN
HELP MY
FRIENDS!

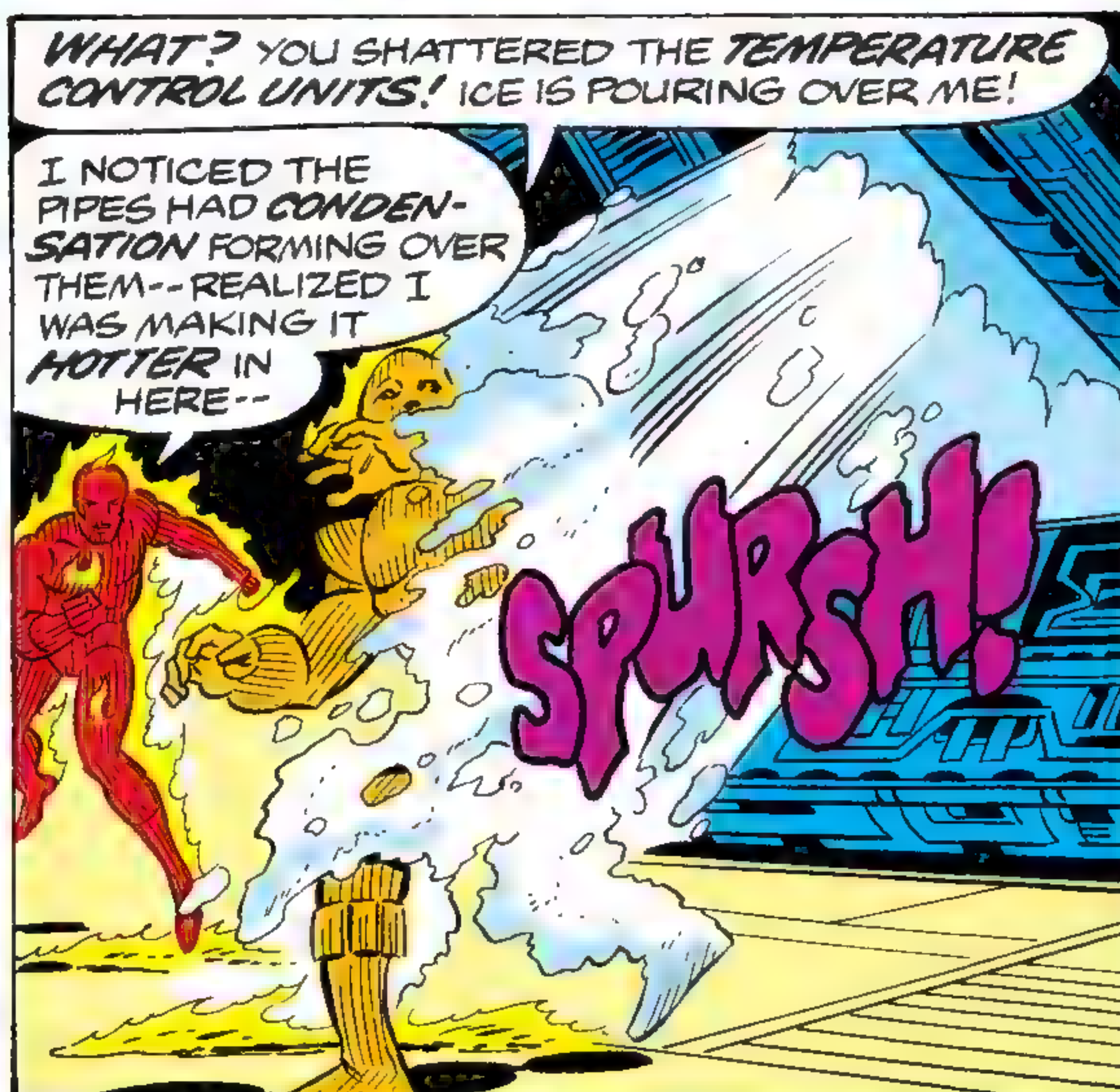
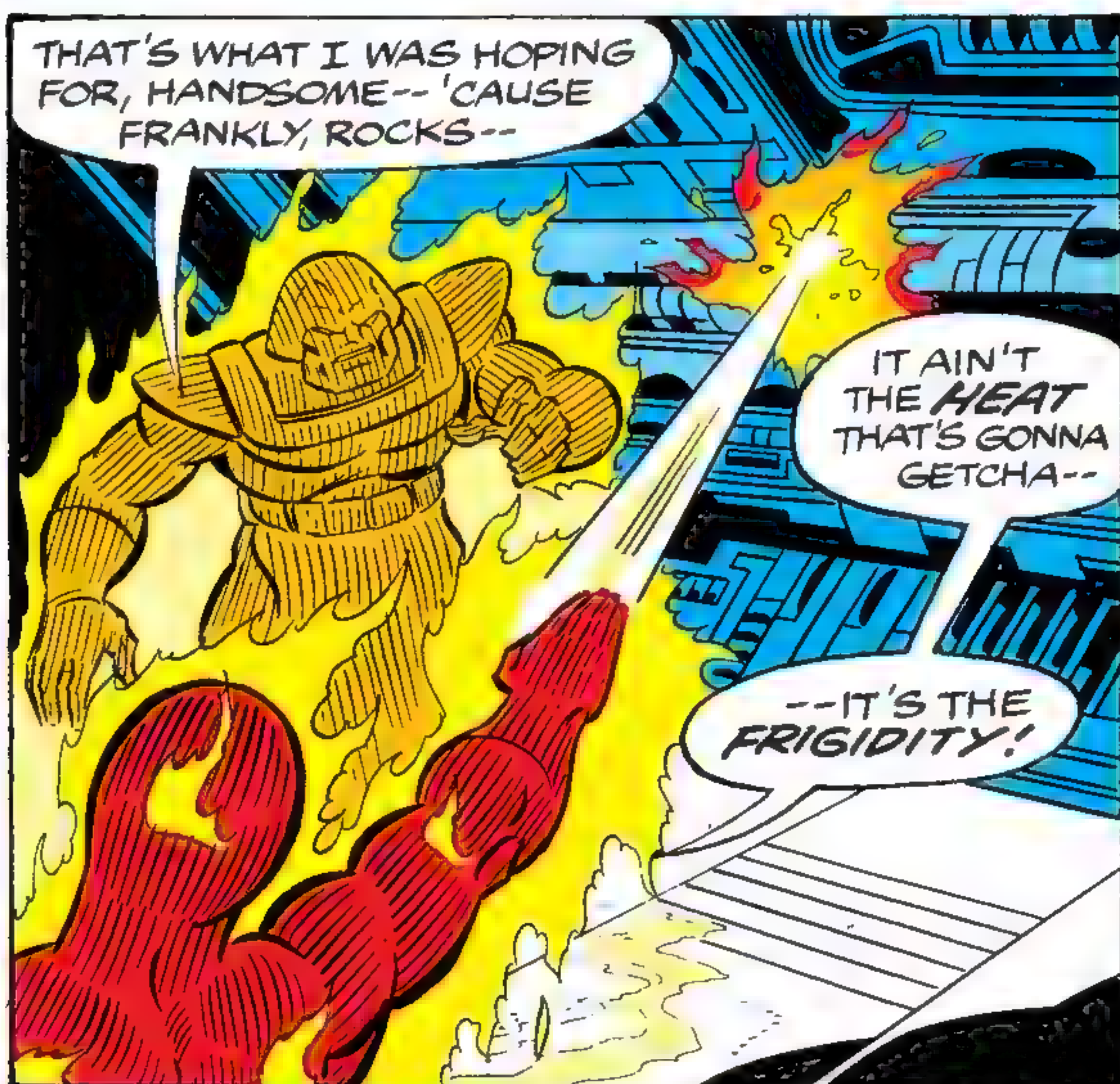
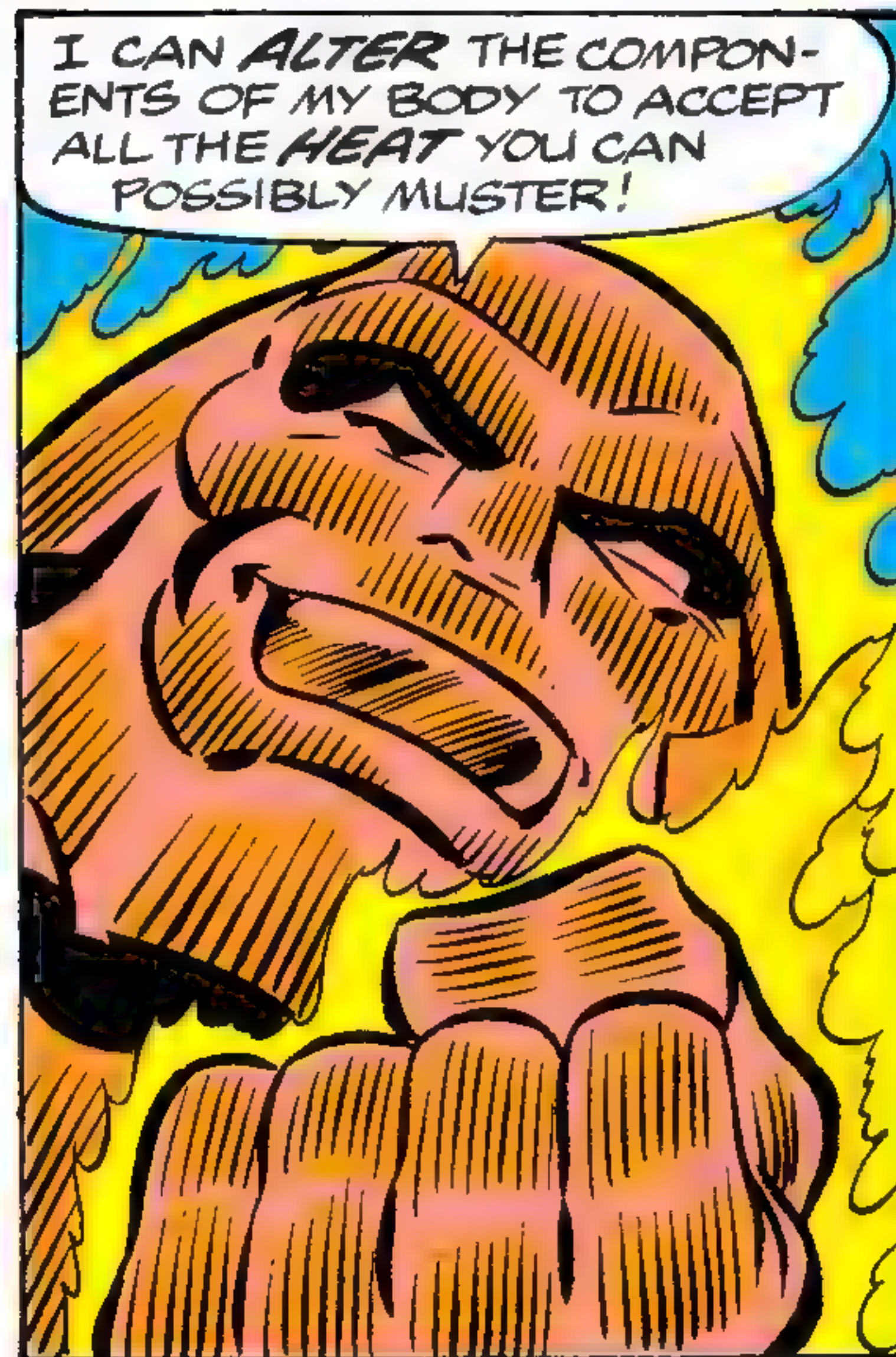
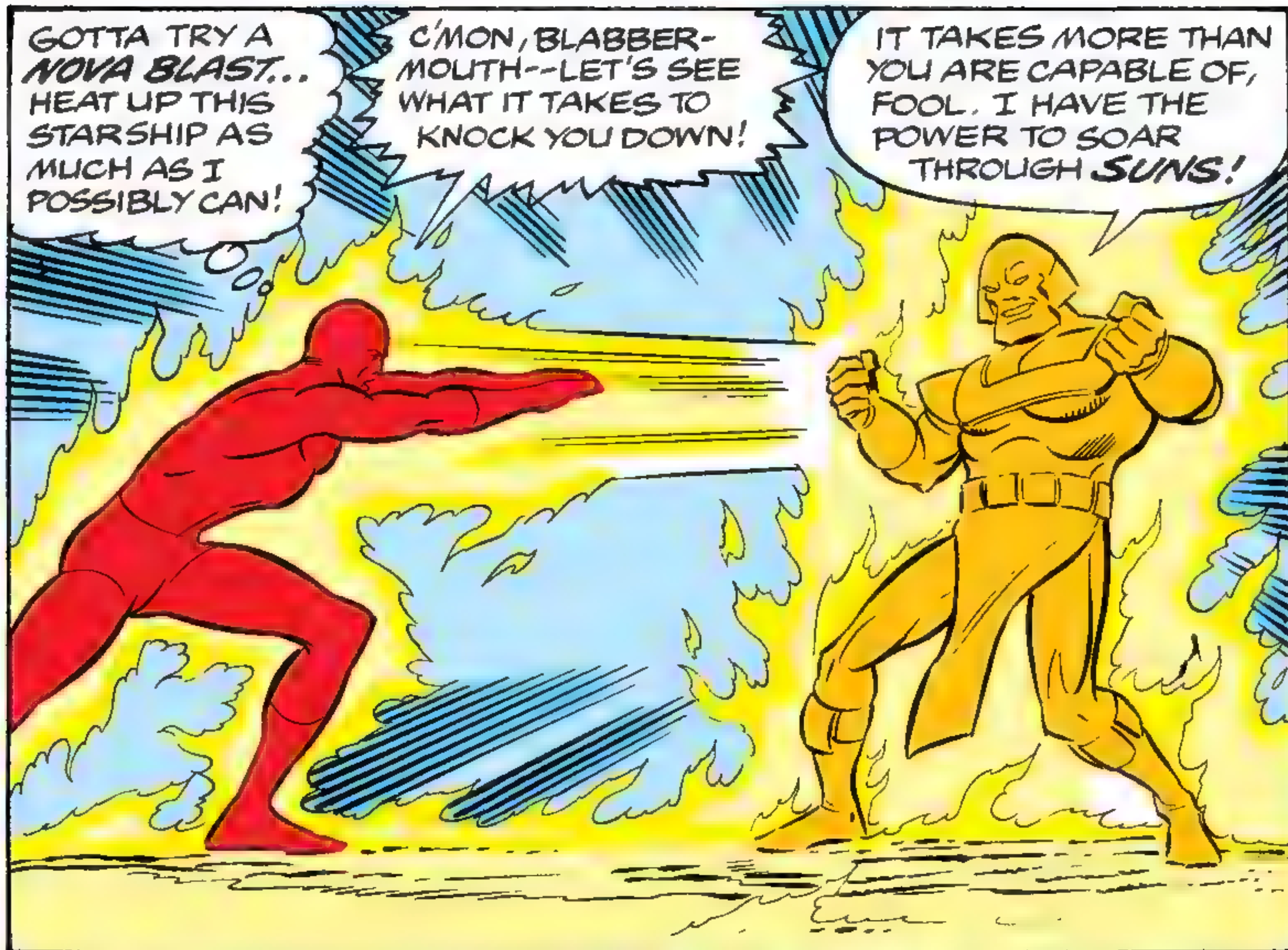
YOU CANNOT HELP THEM, STRIPLING.
THE **WOMAN** IS ALREADY DOWNED--

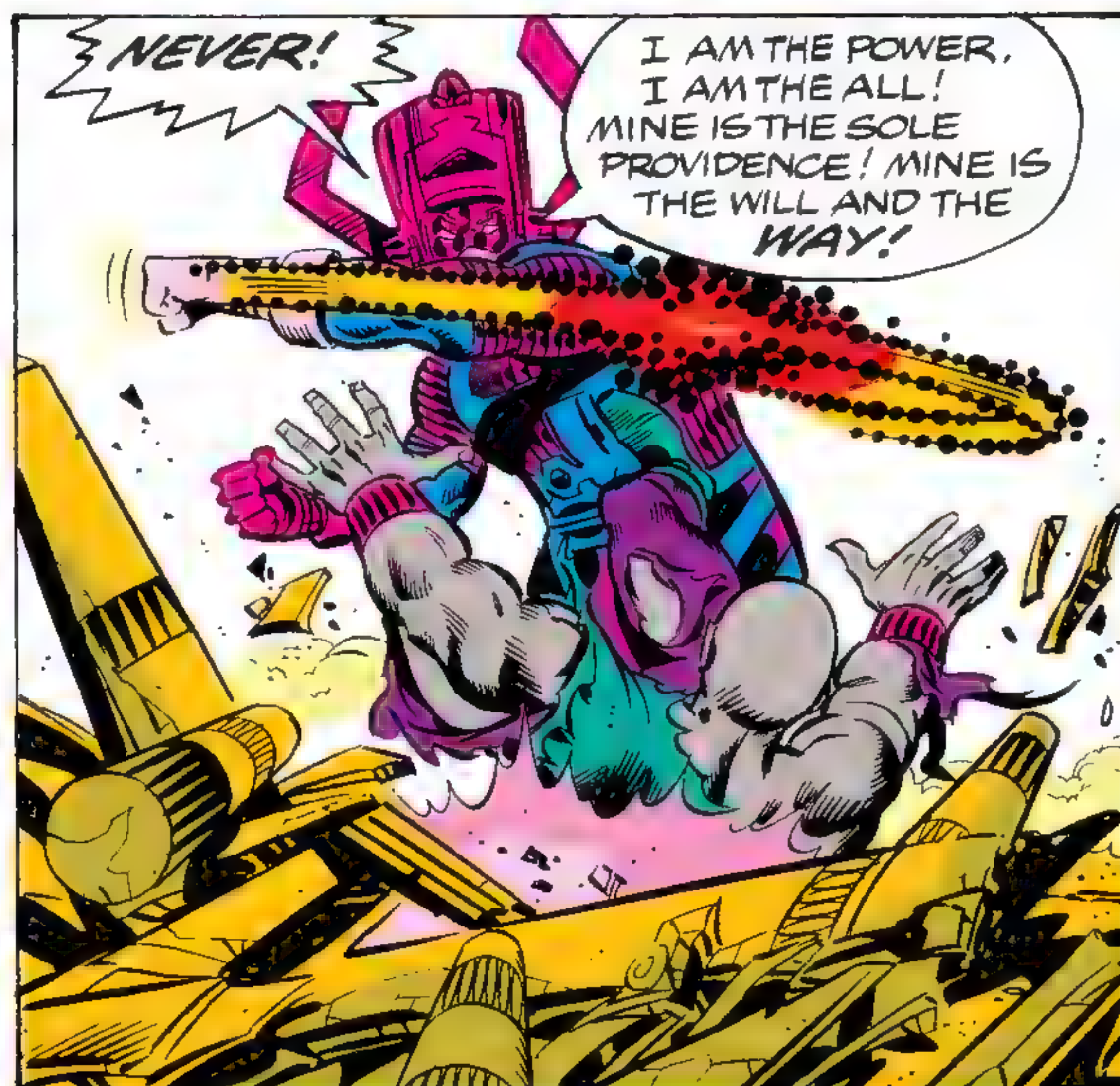
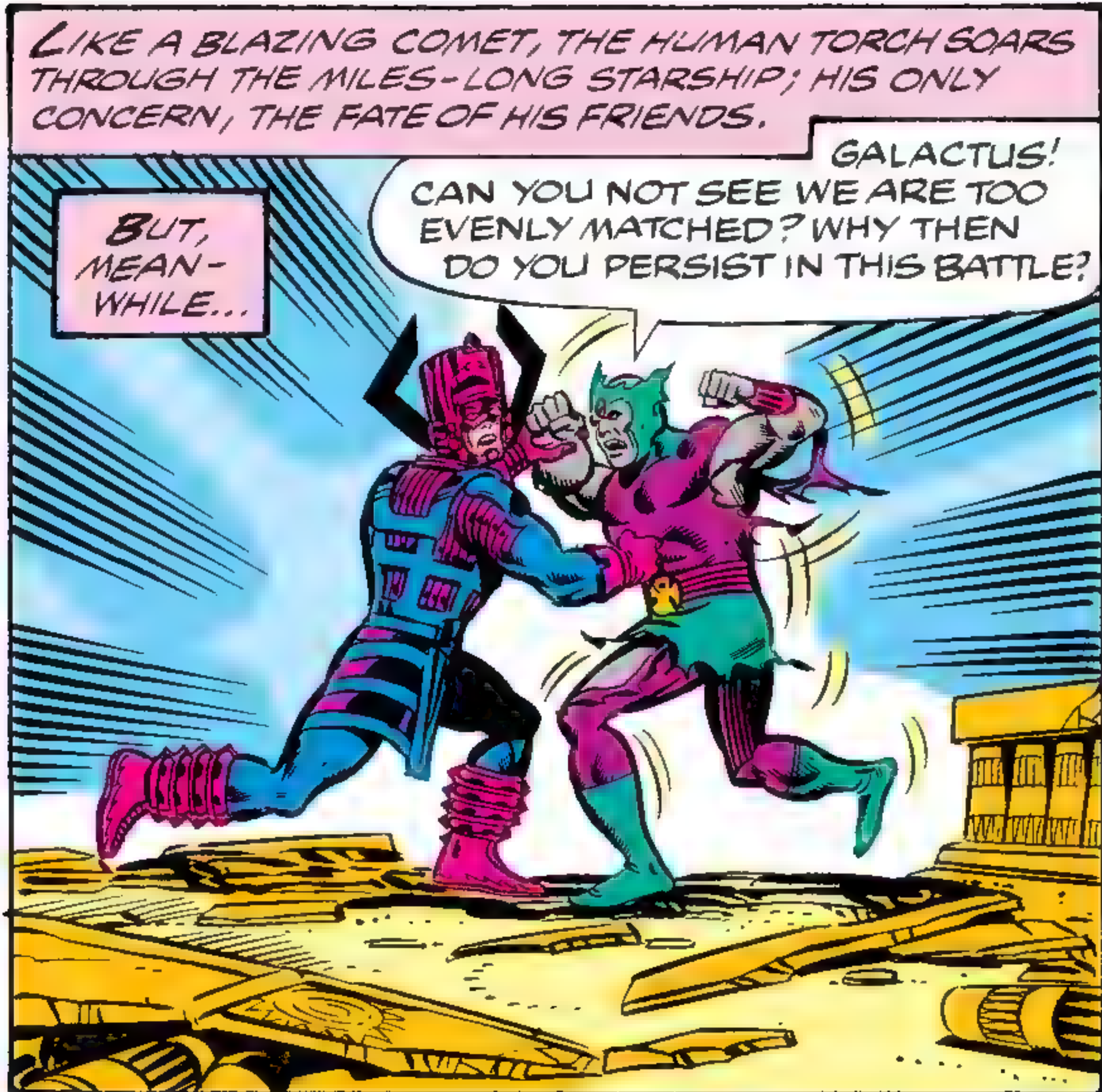
THE MONSTER
WILL SOON **JOIN**
HER!

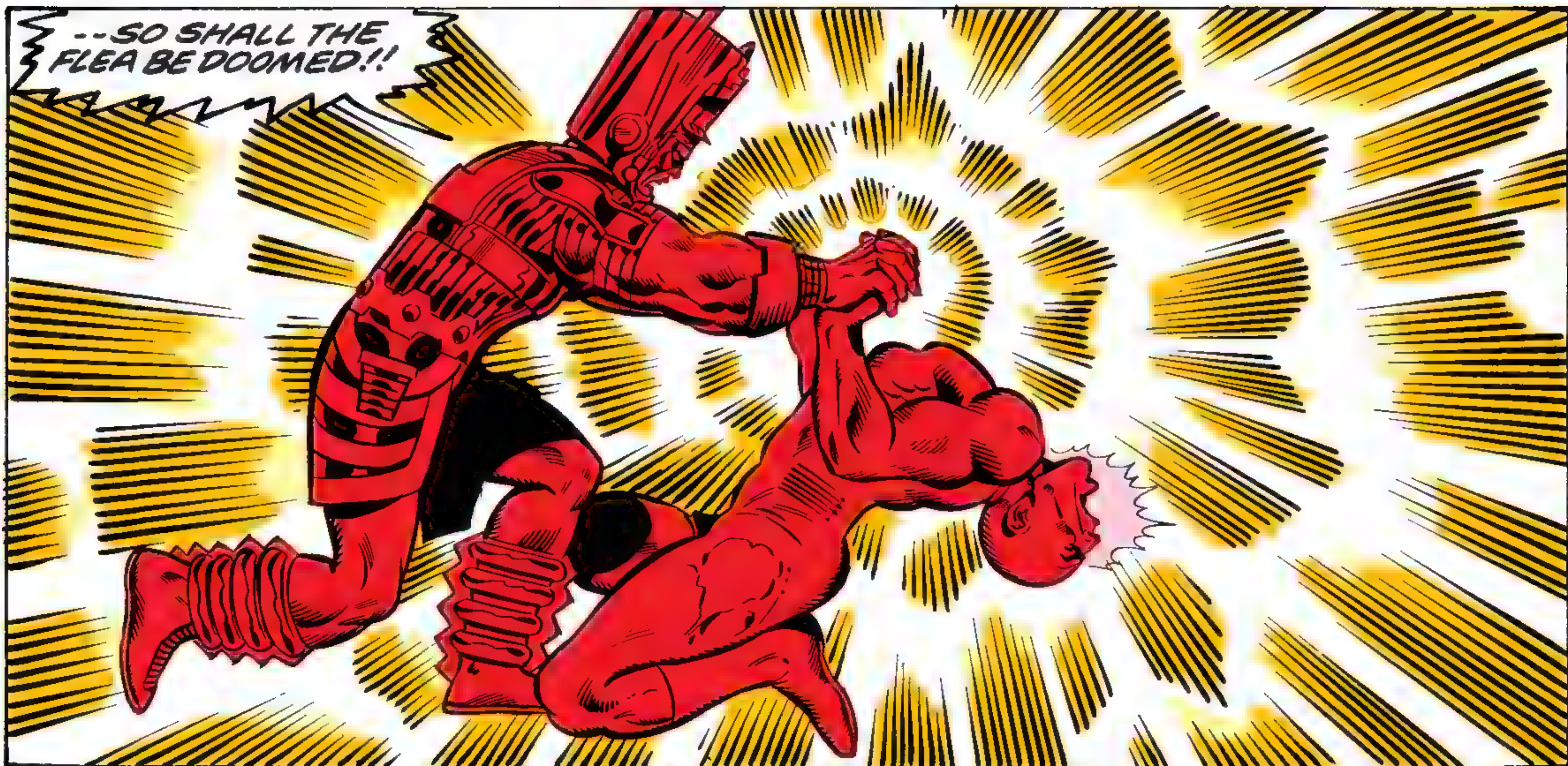


YOUR
STRETCHING
FRIEND CANNOT
BE LONG
BEHIND THEM
BOTH!

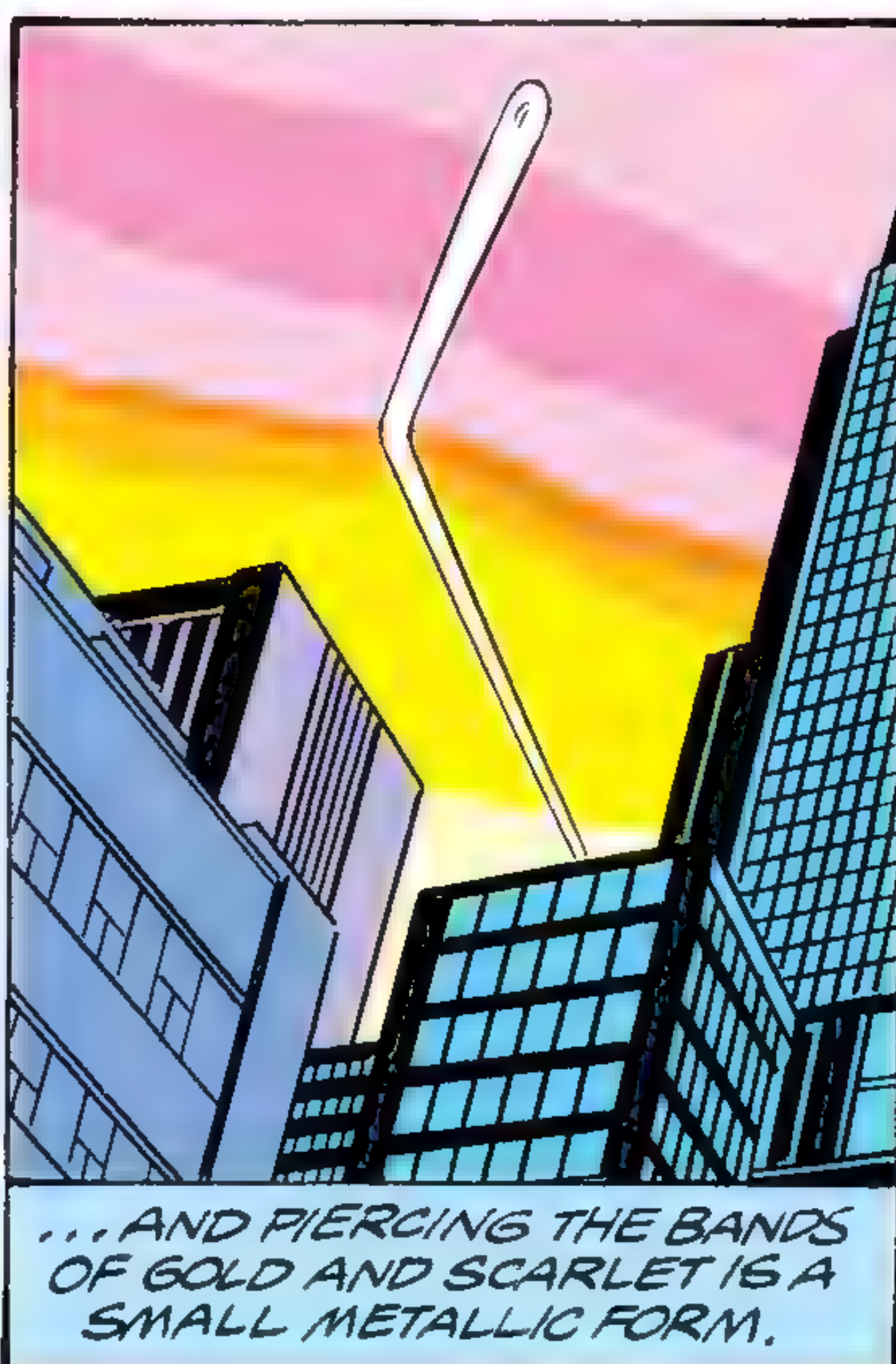
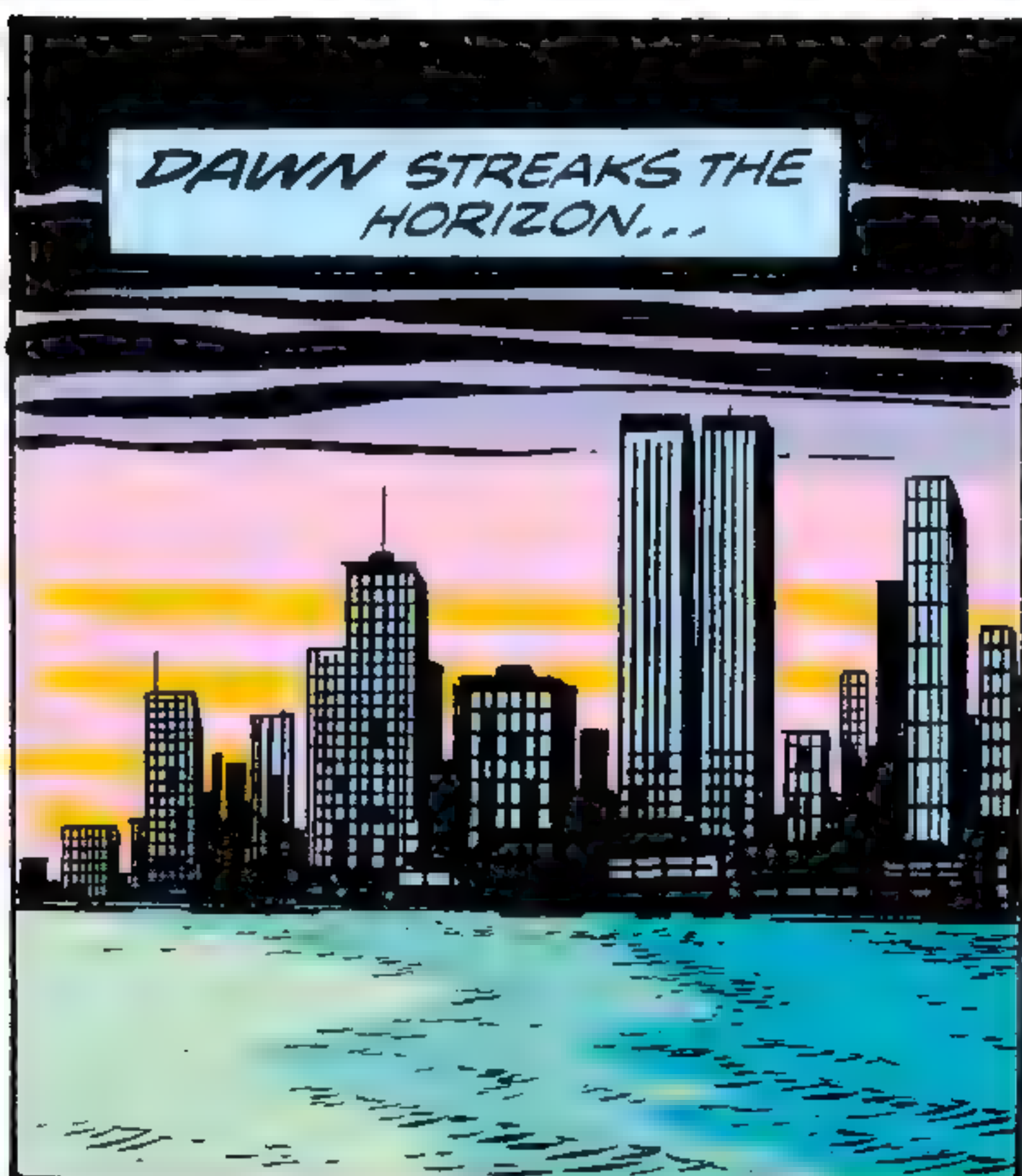
NOT NECESSARILY,
TERRY--IF WHAT I
THINK IS TRUE!



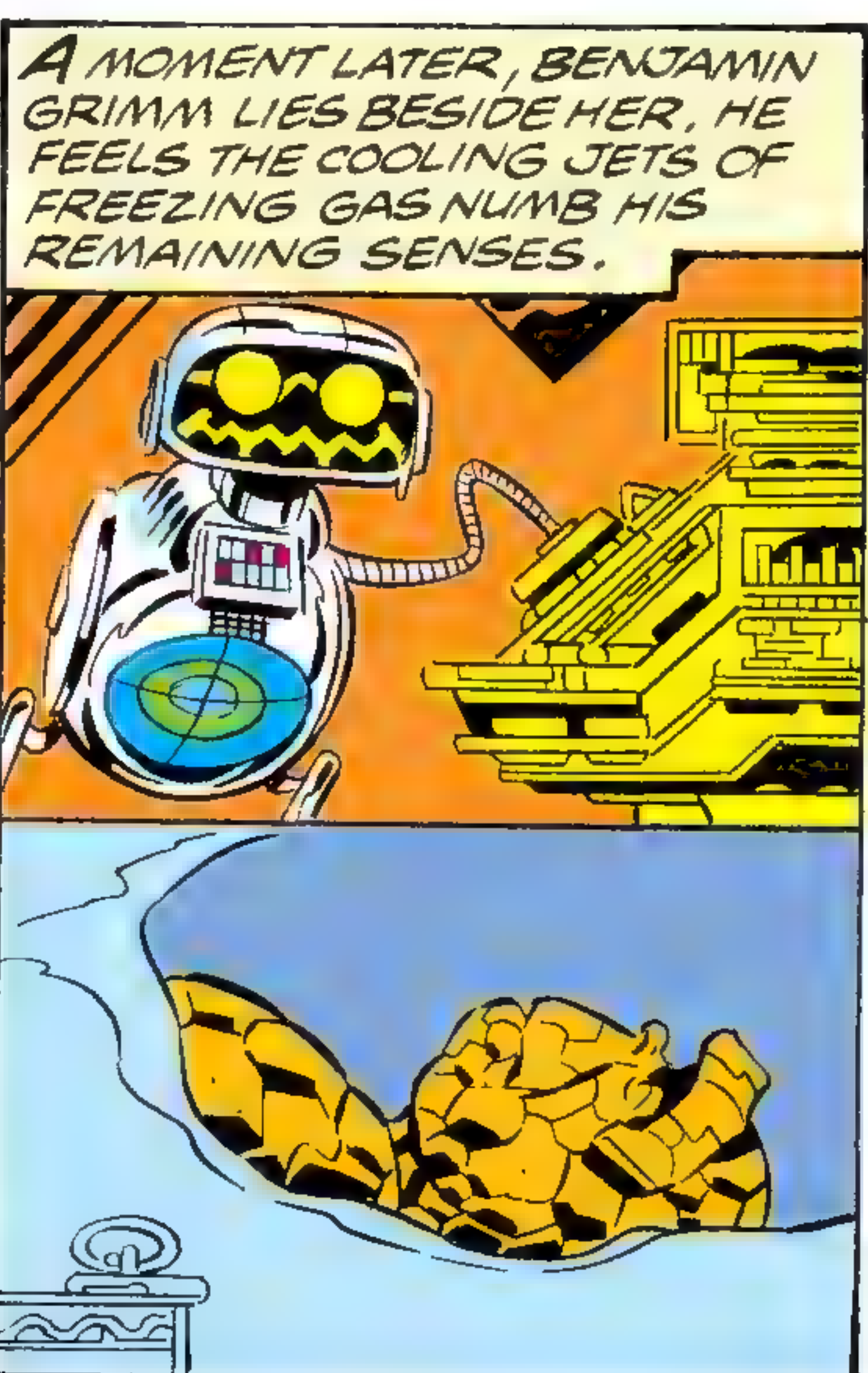
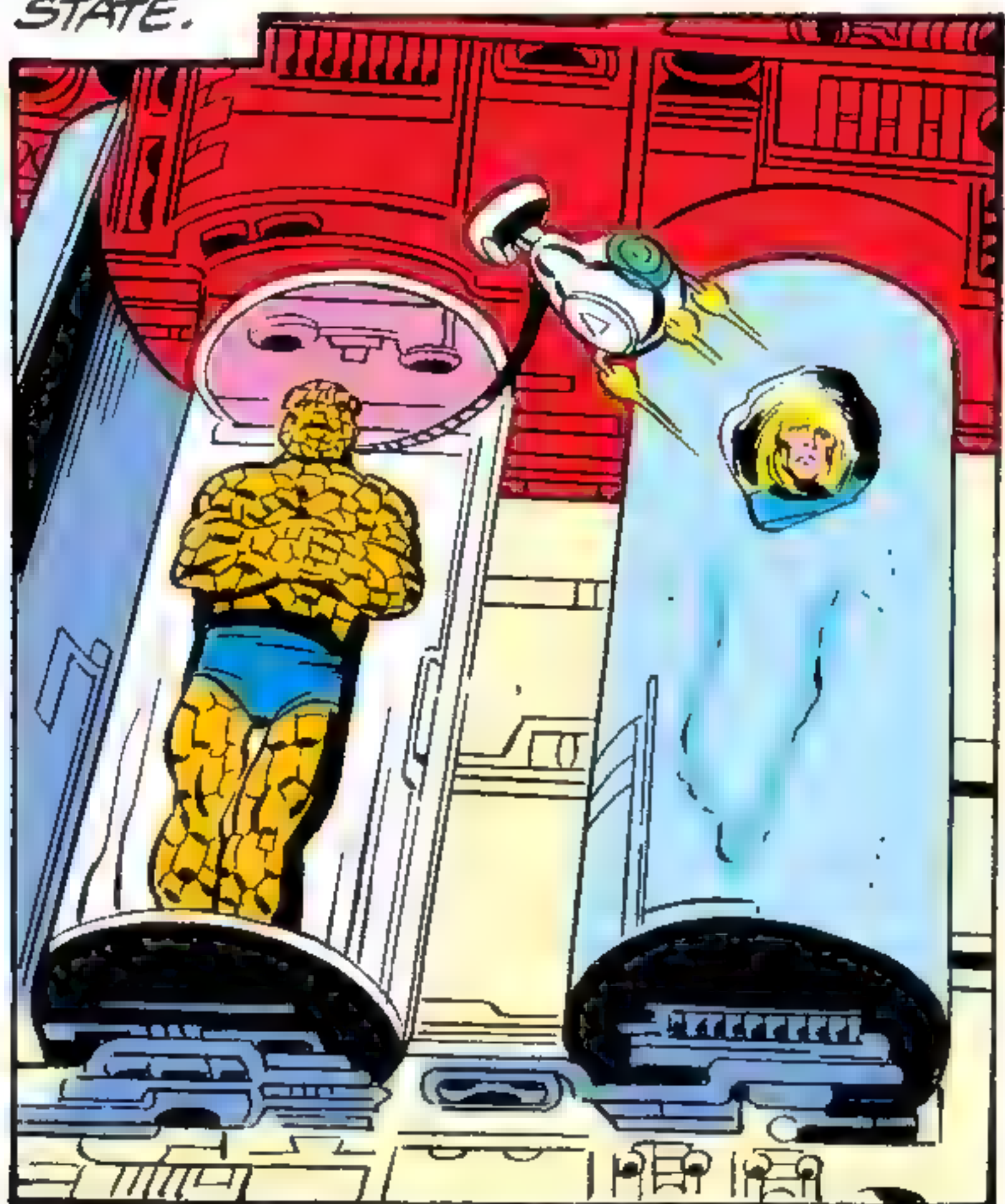


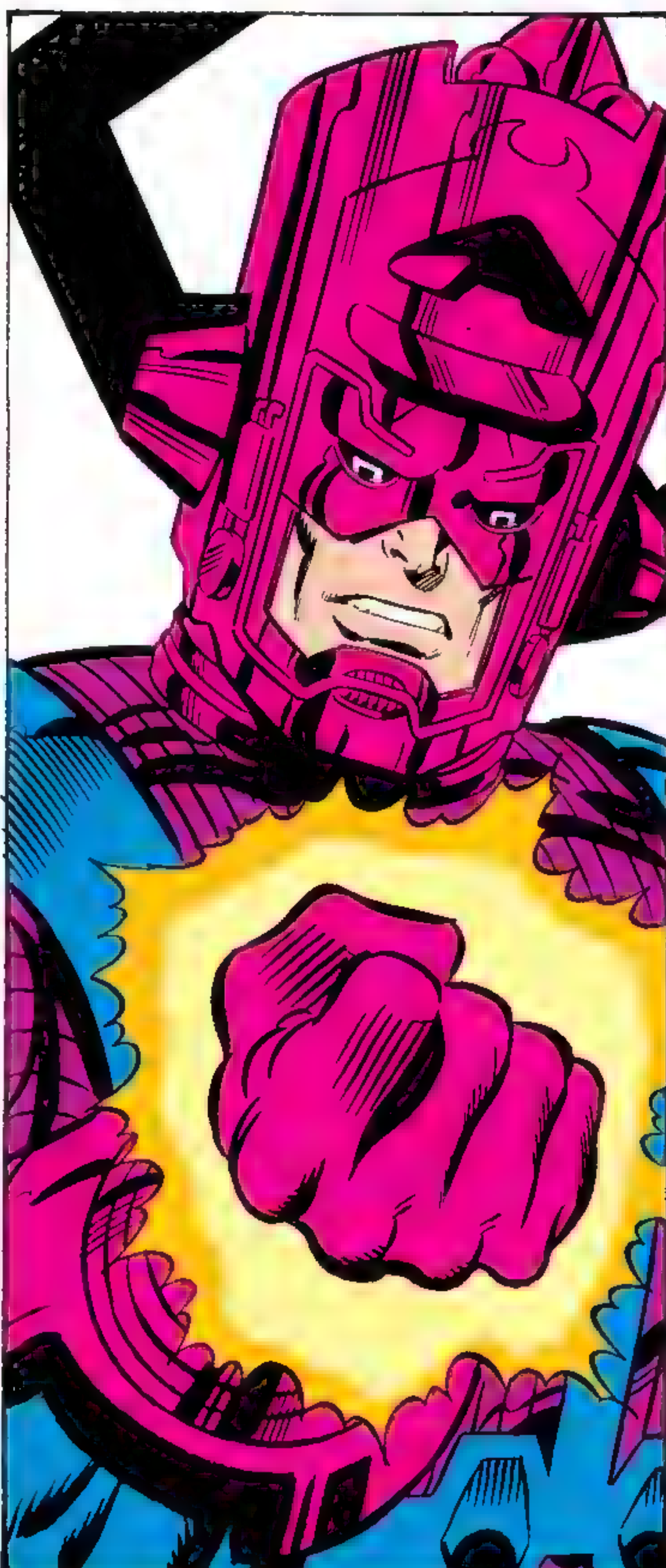
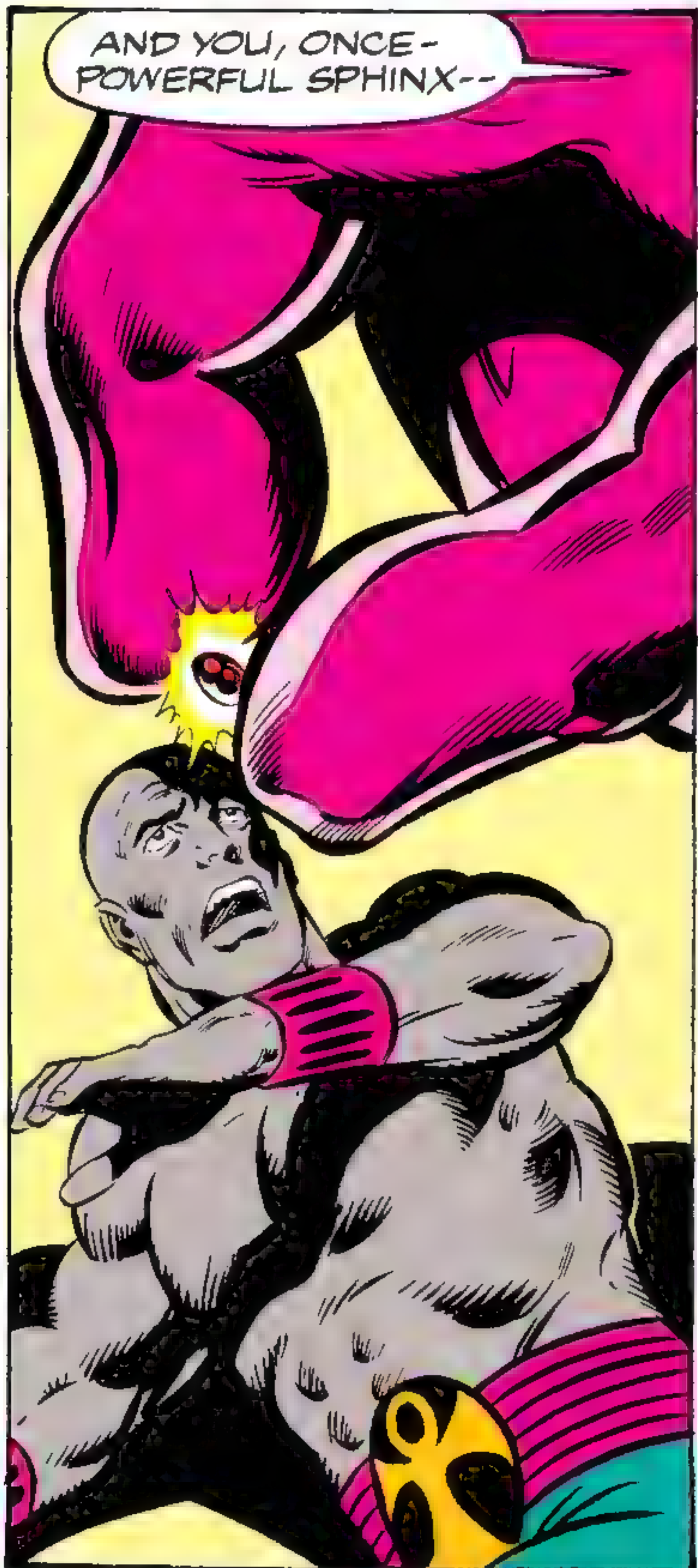
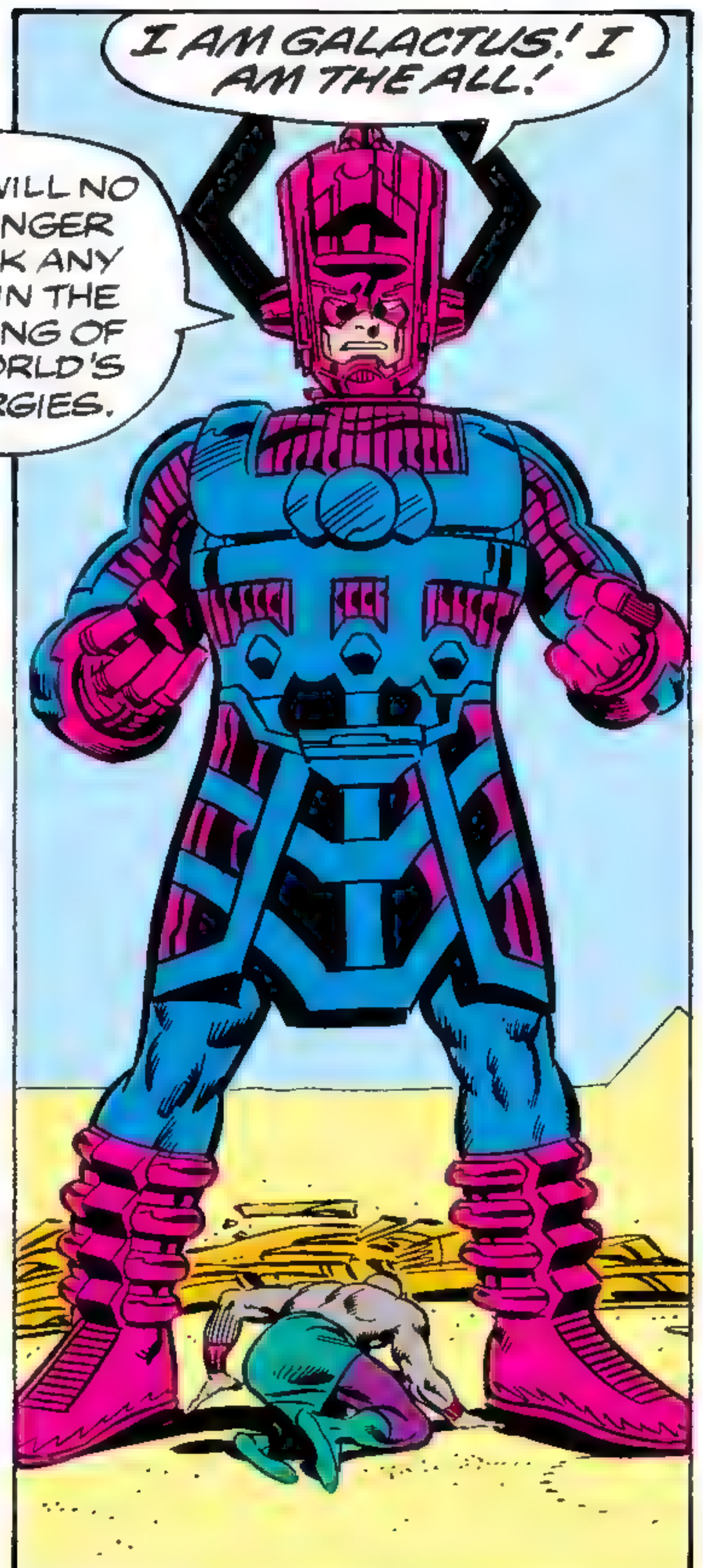
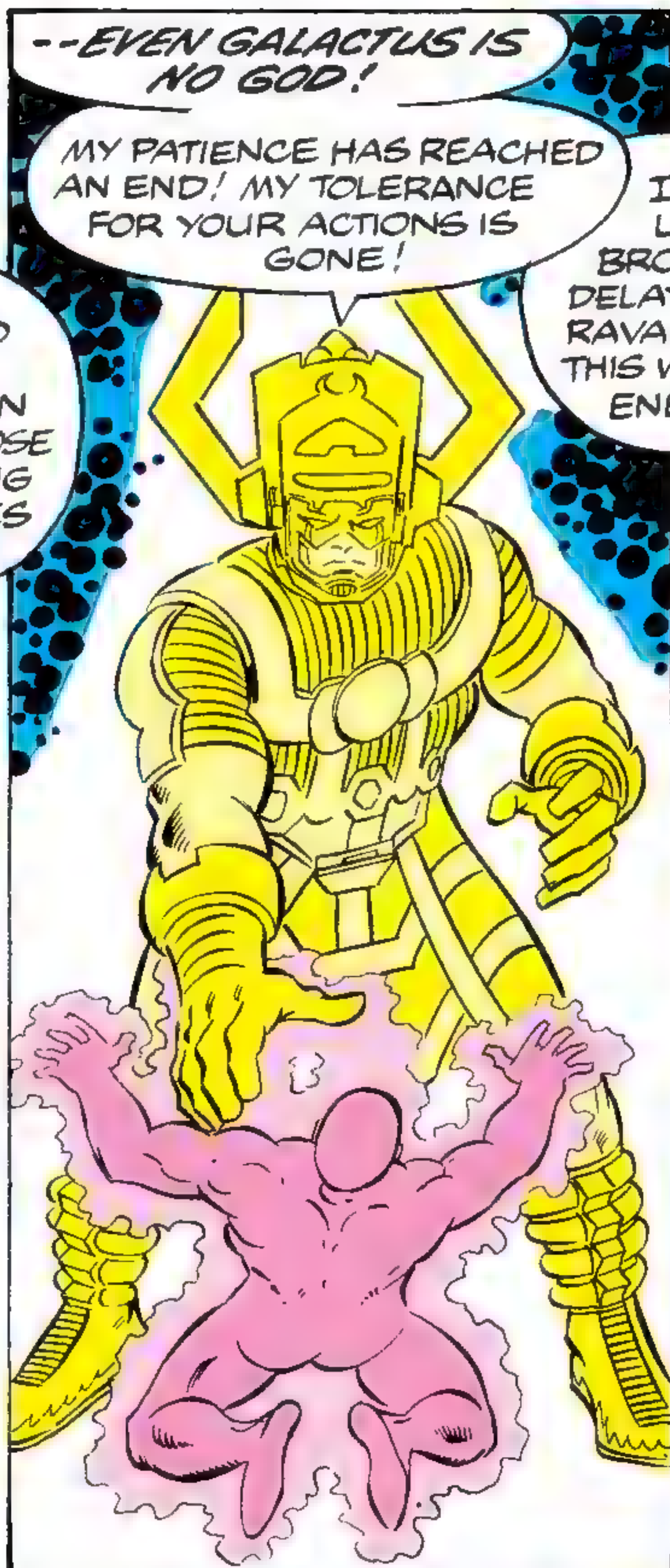
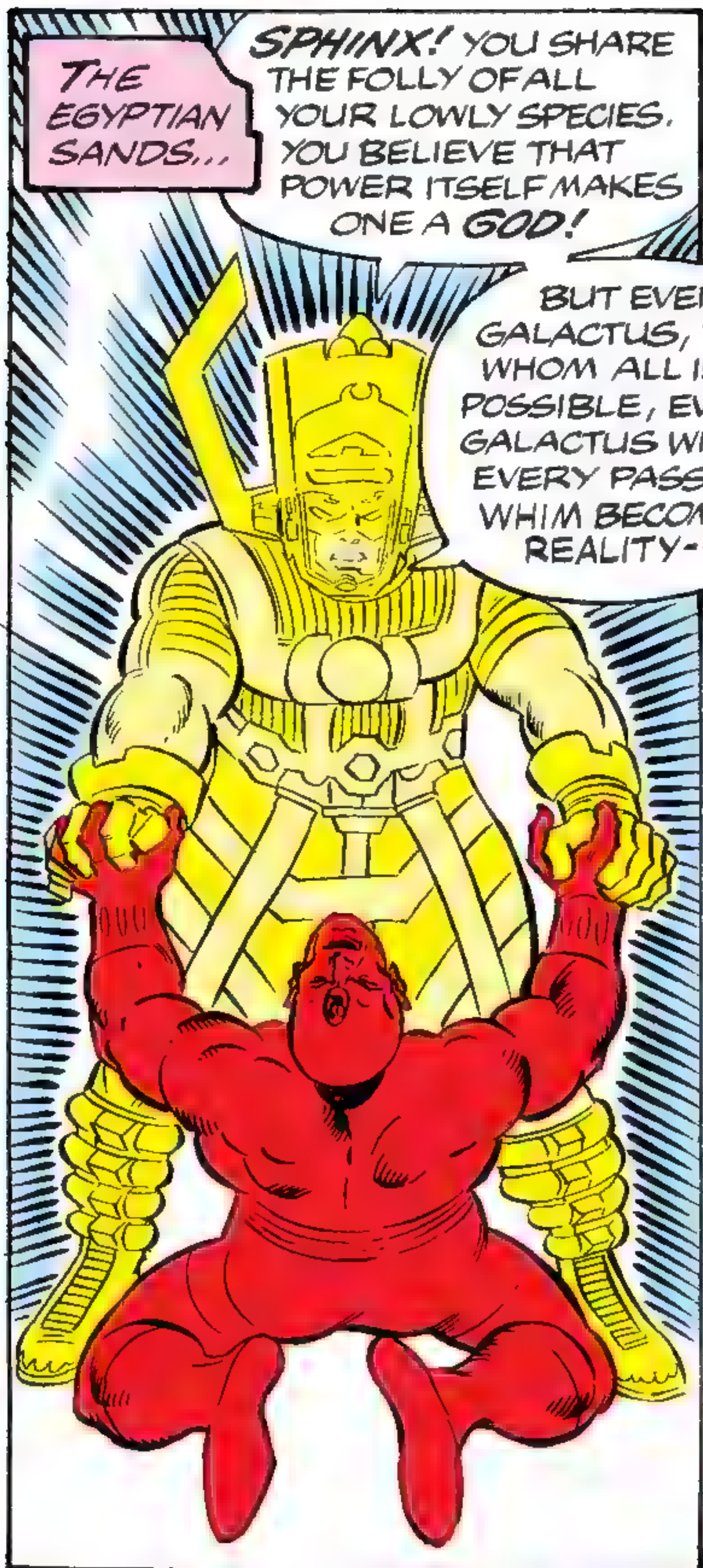


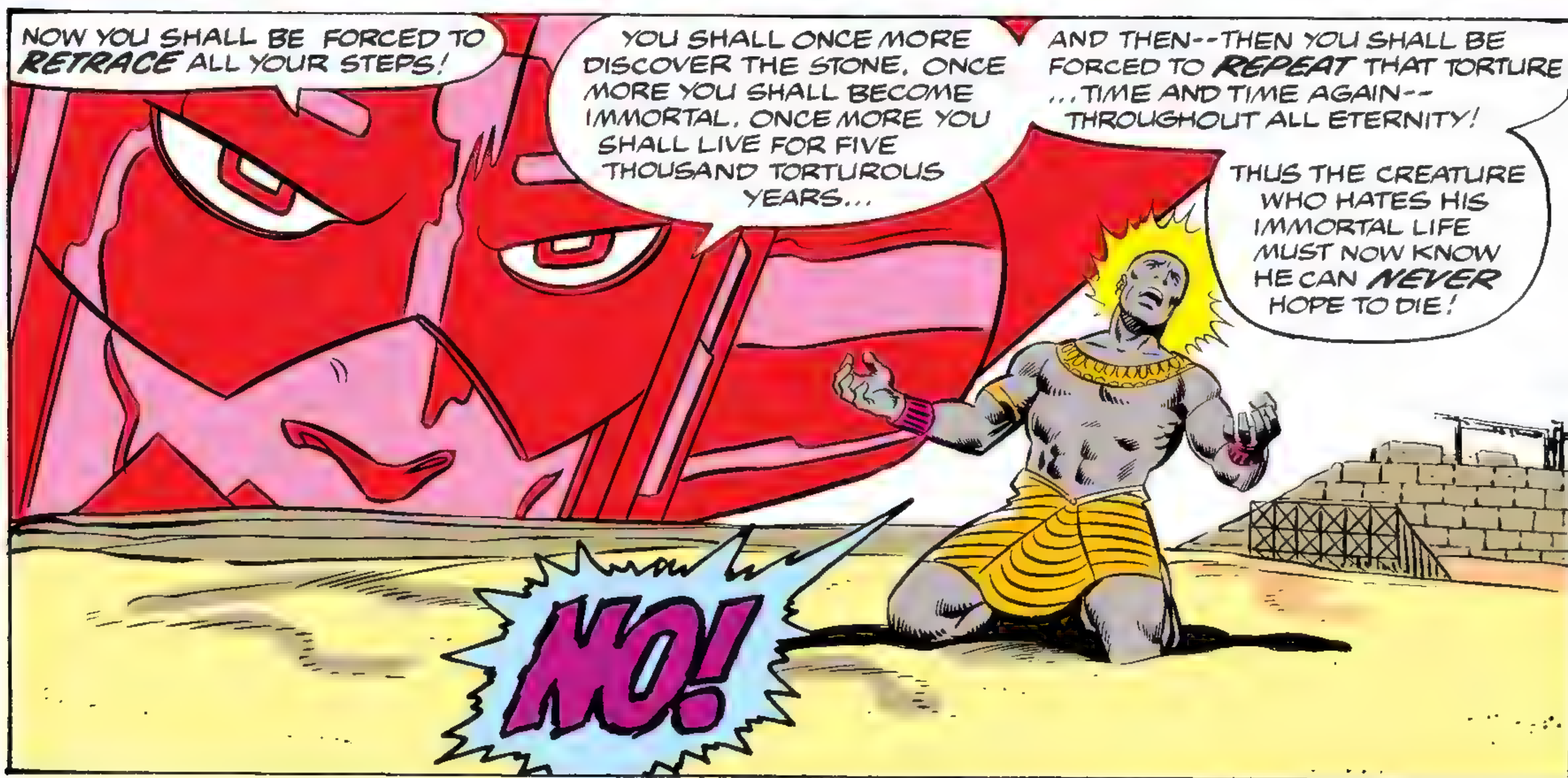
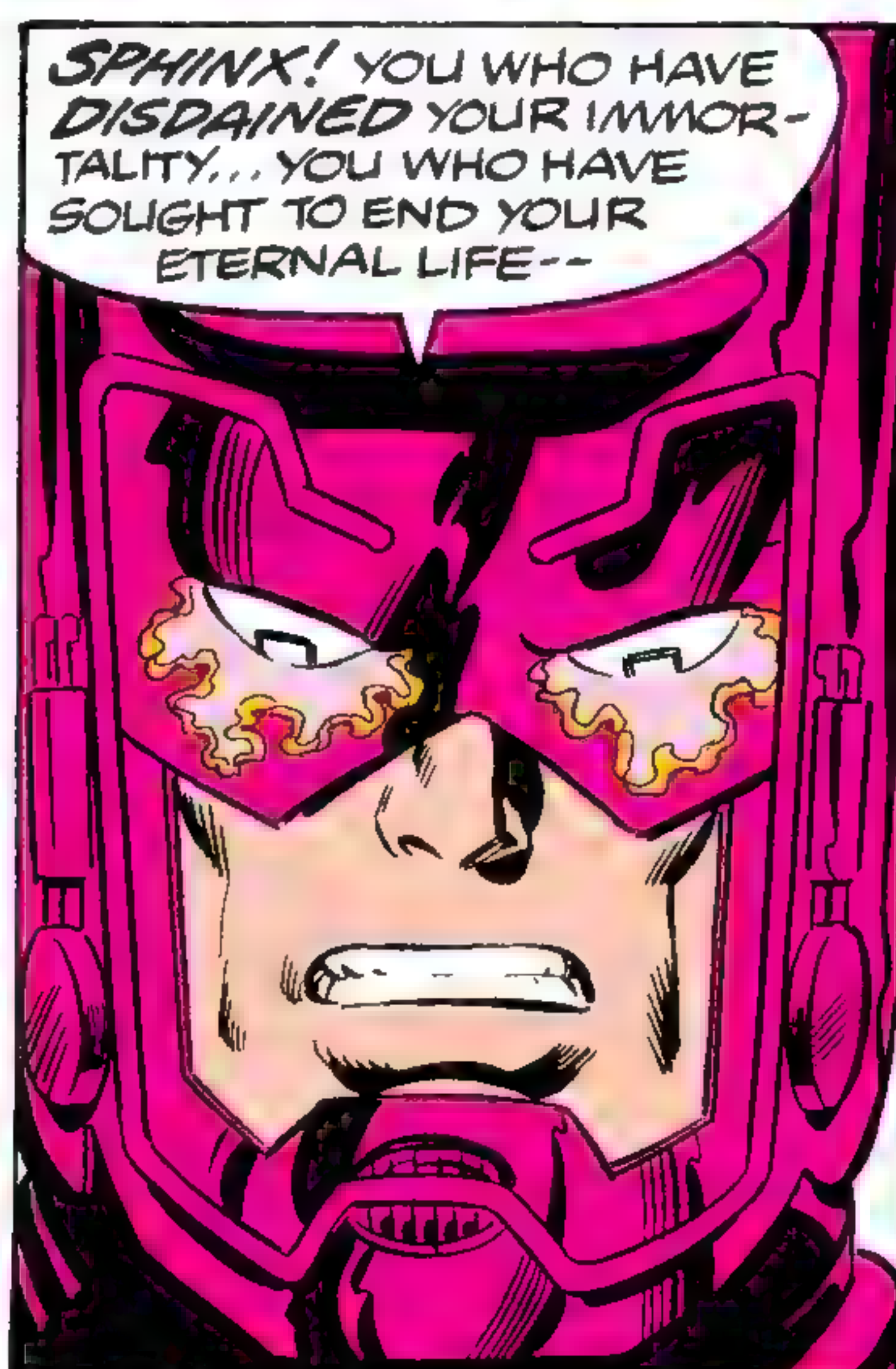
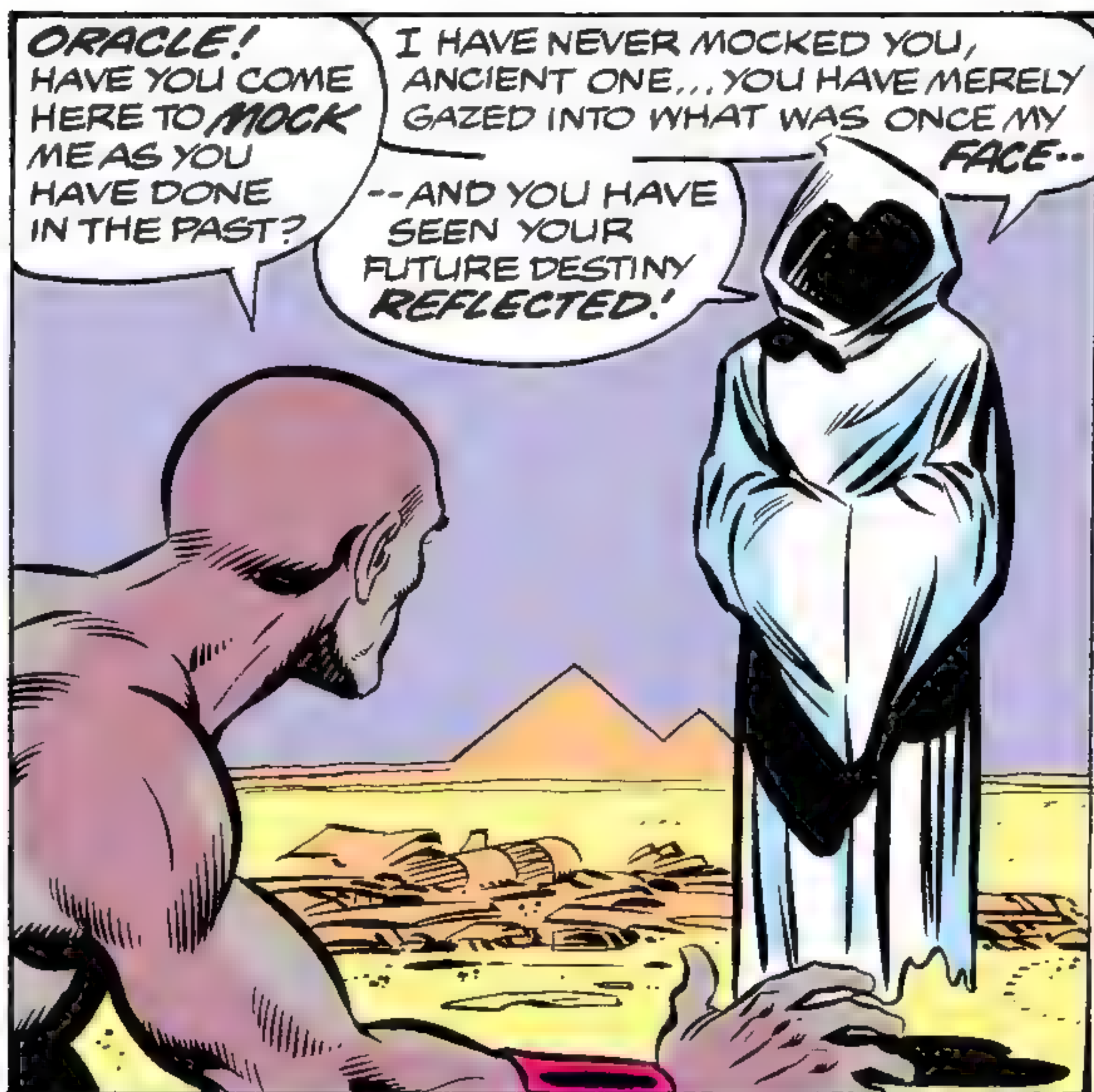
A WORLD MAY TEETER IN THE BALANCE, BUT IN FARAWAY NEW YORK CITY, LIFE CONTINUES ON, UNAWARE OF THE COSMIC BATTLE BEING WAGED HALF A PLANET AWAY...

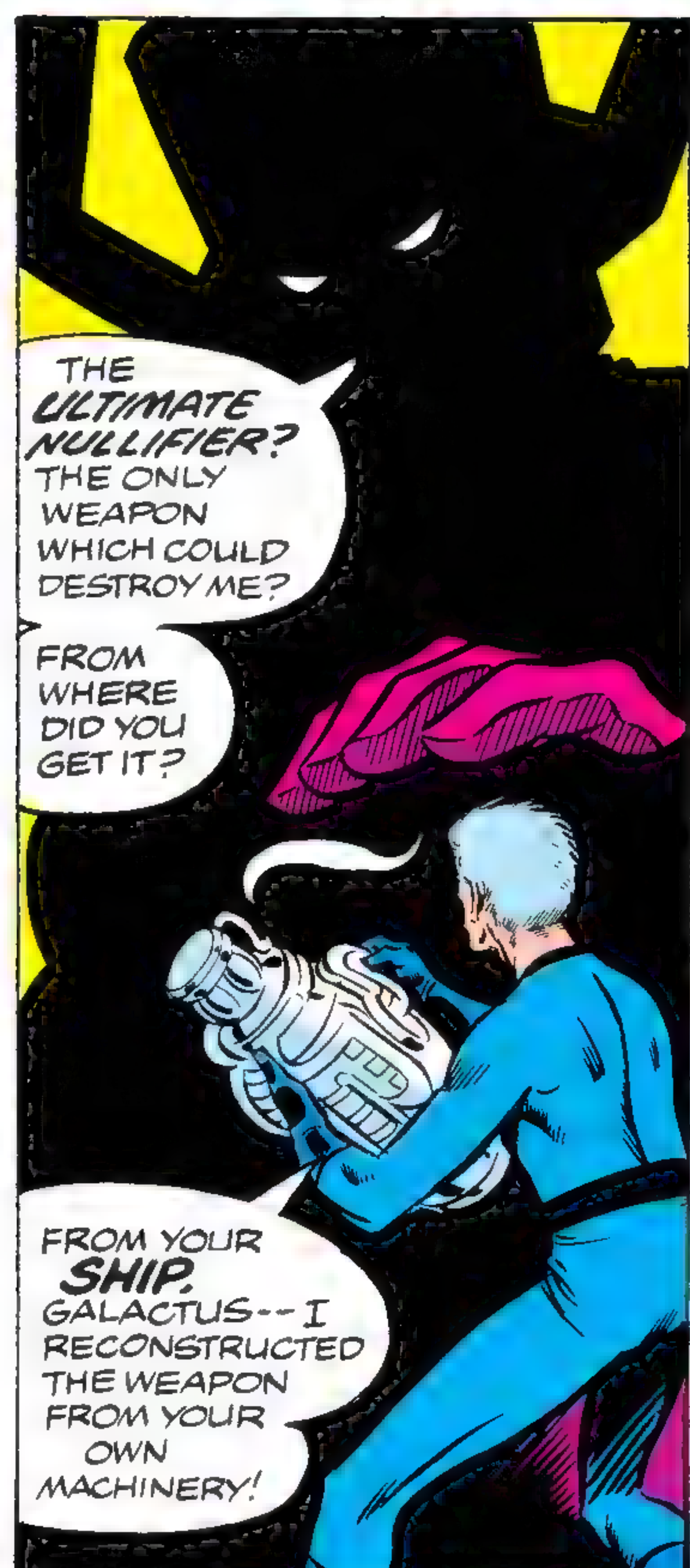
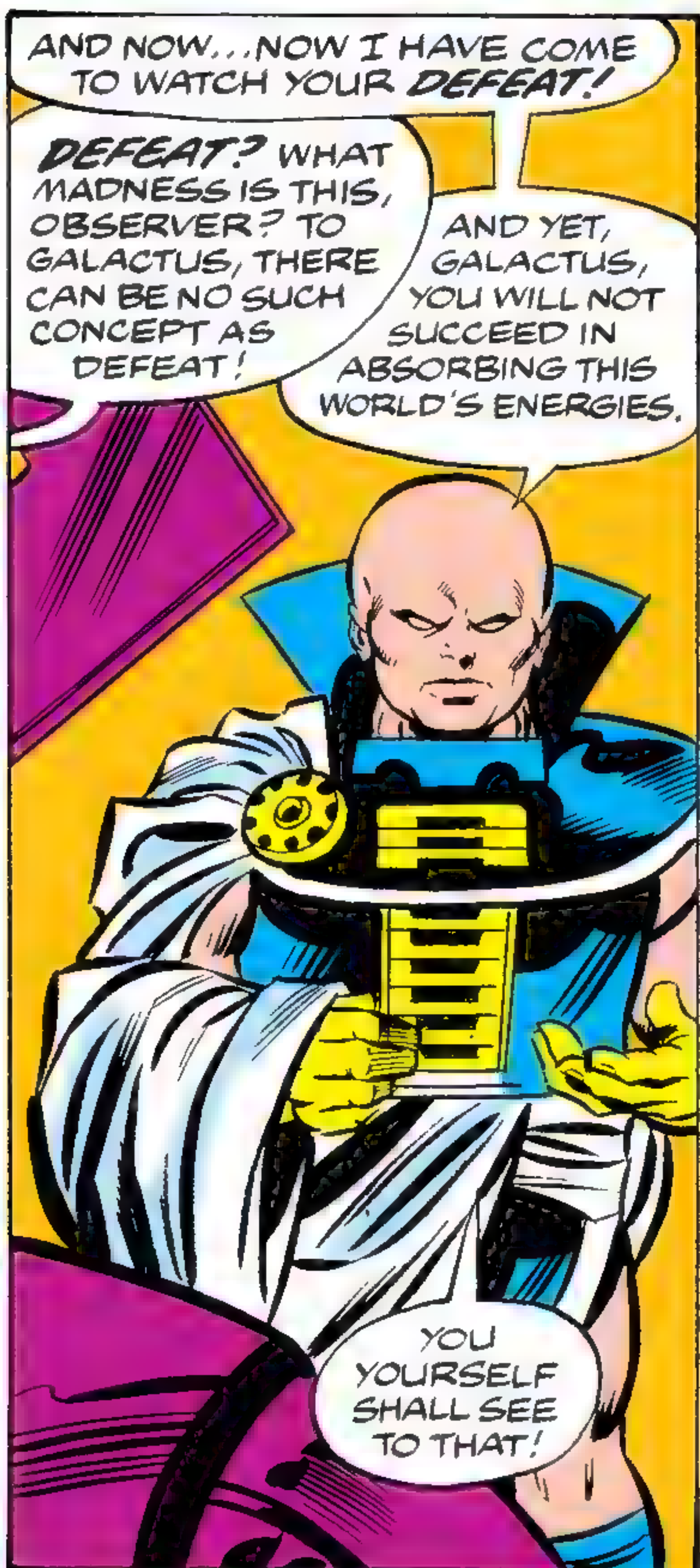
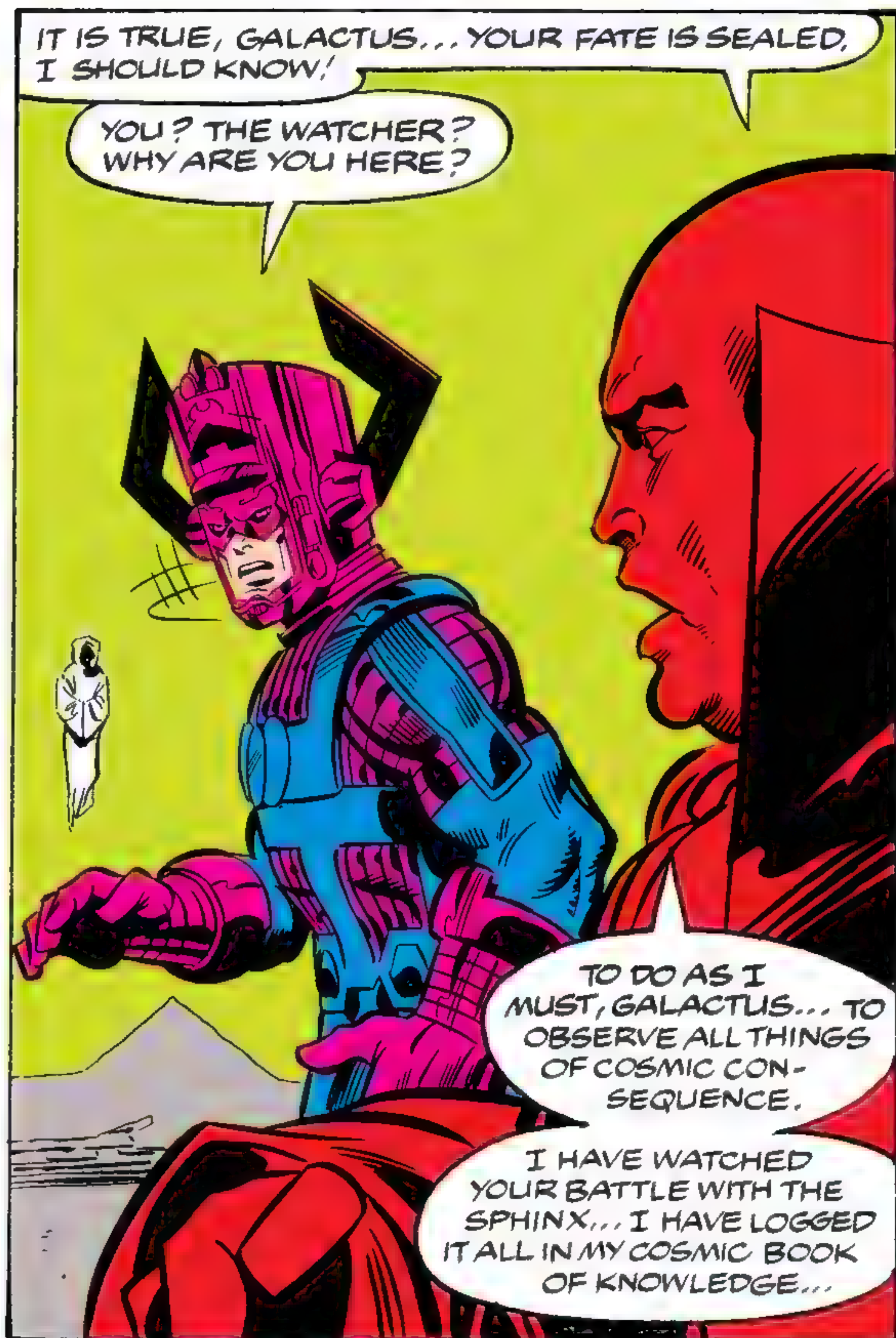


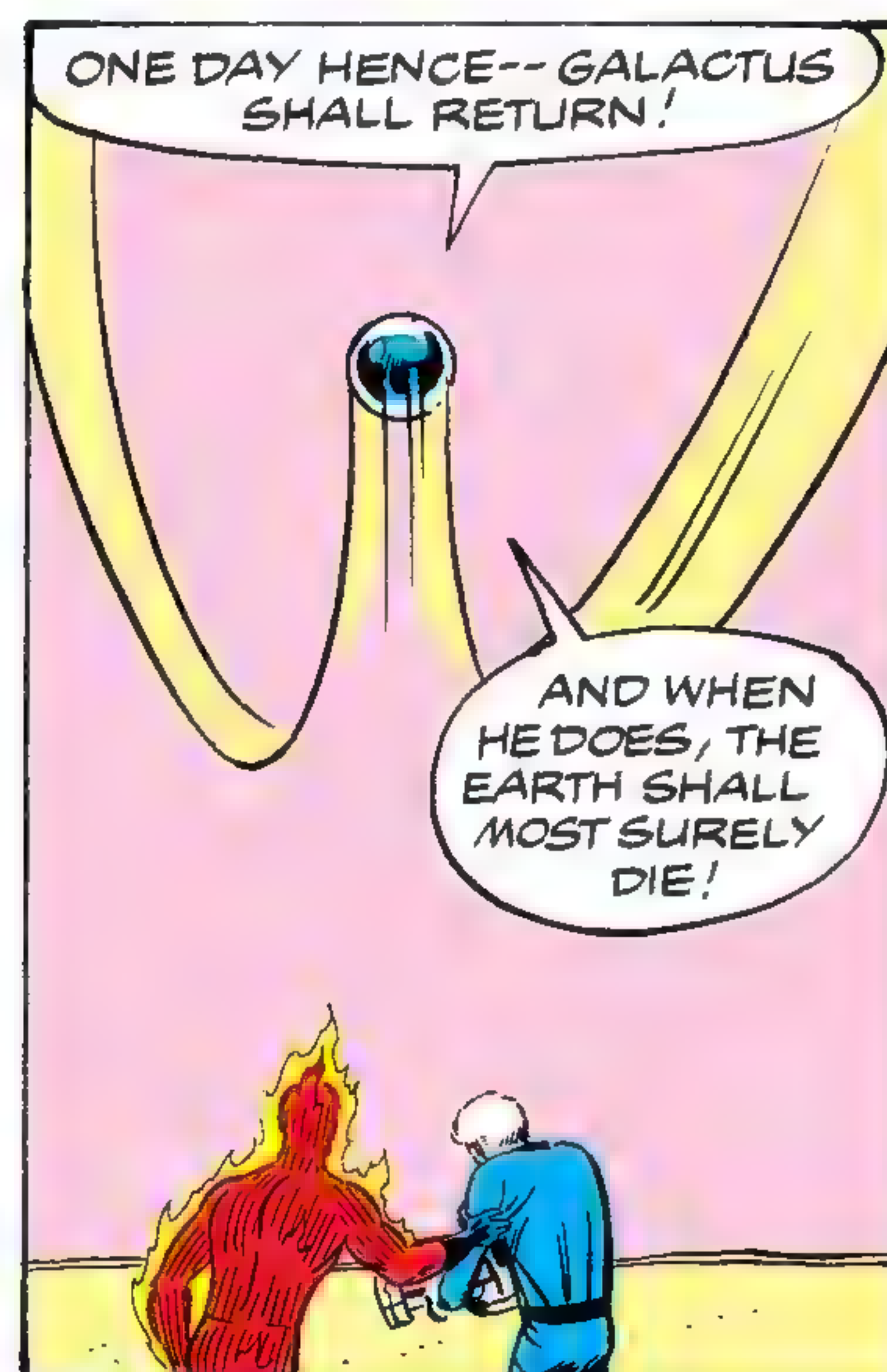
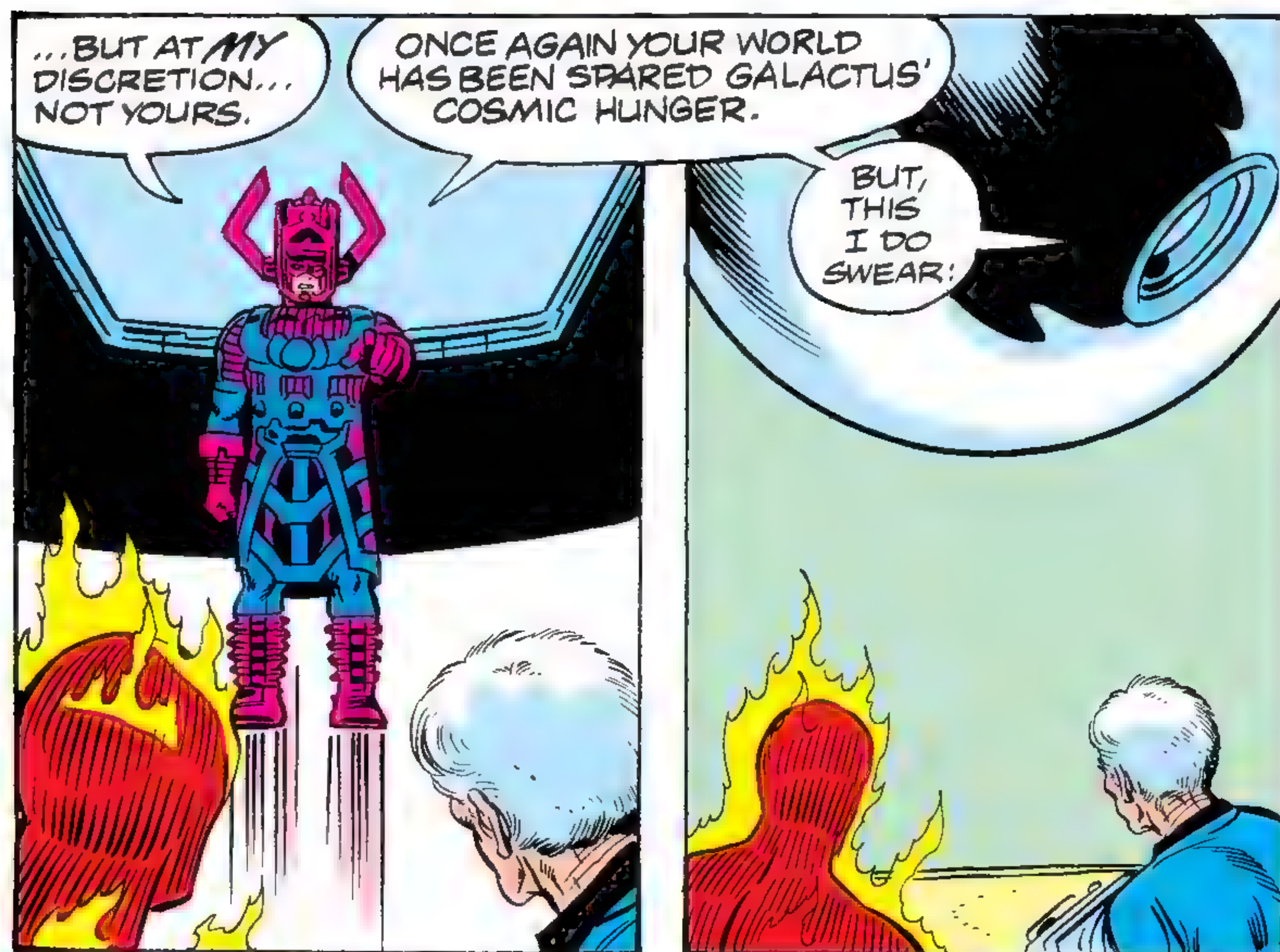
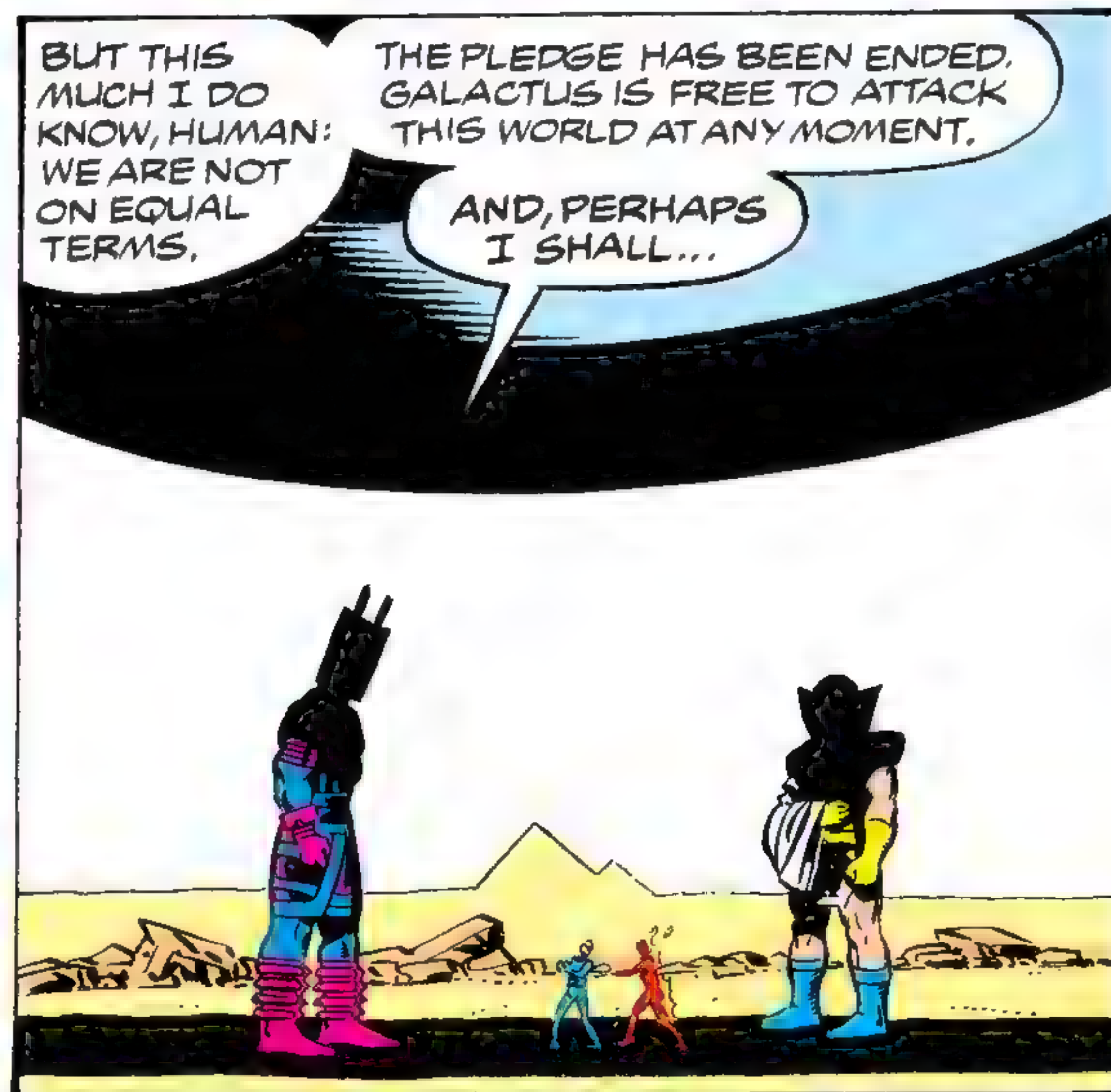
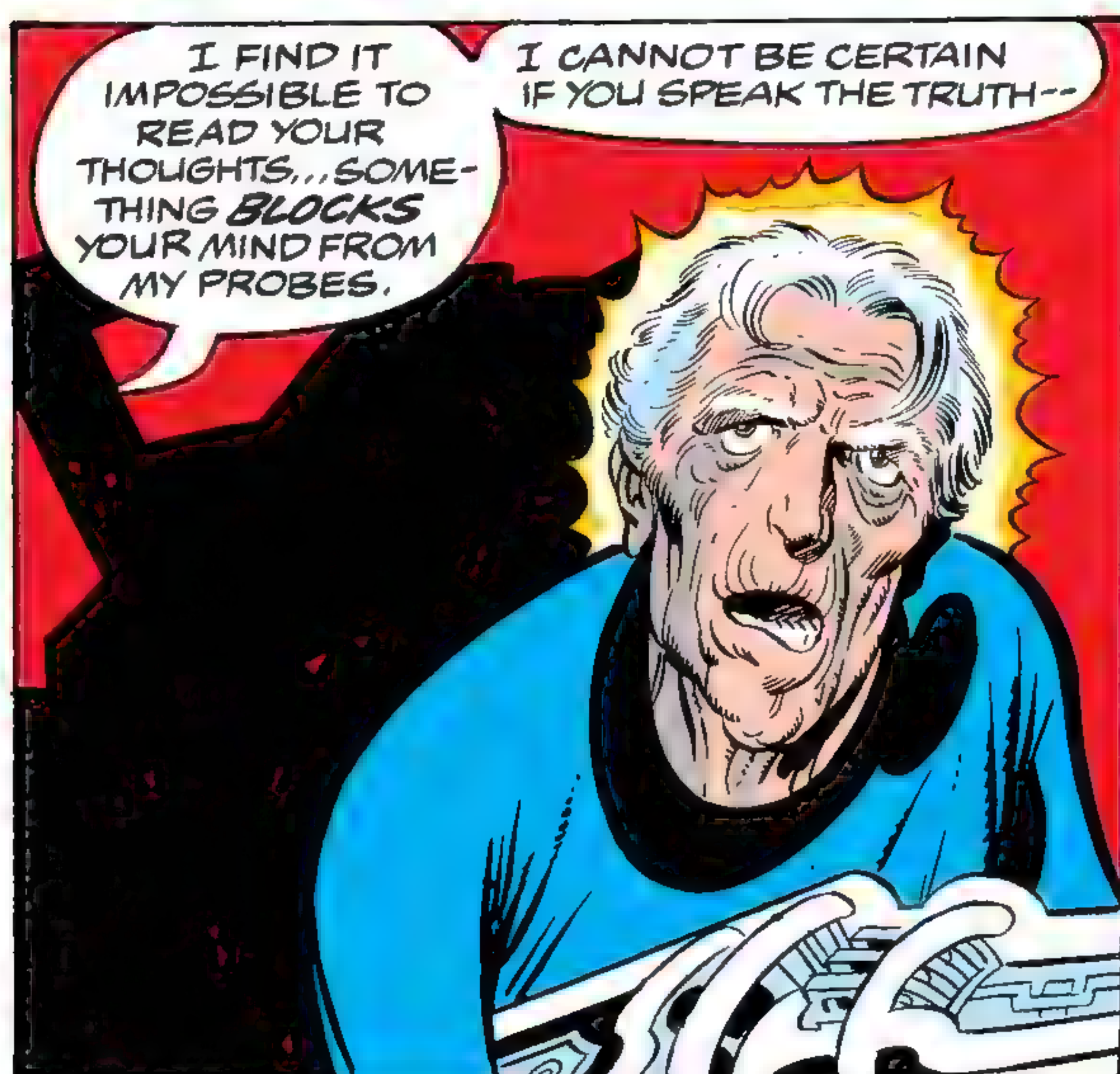
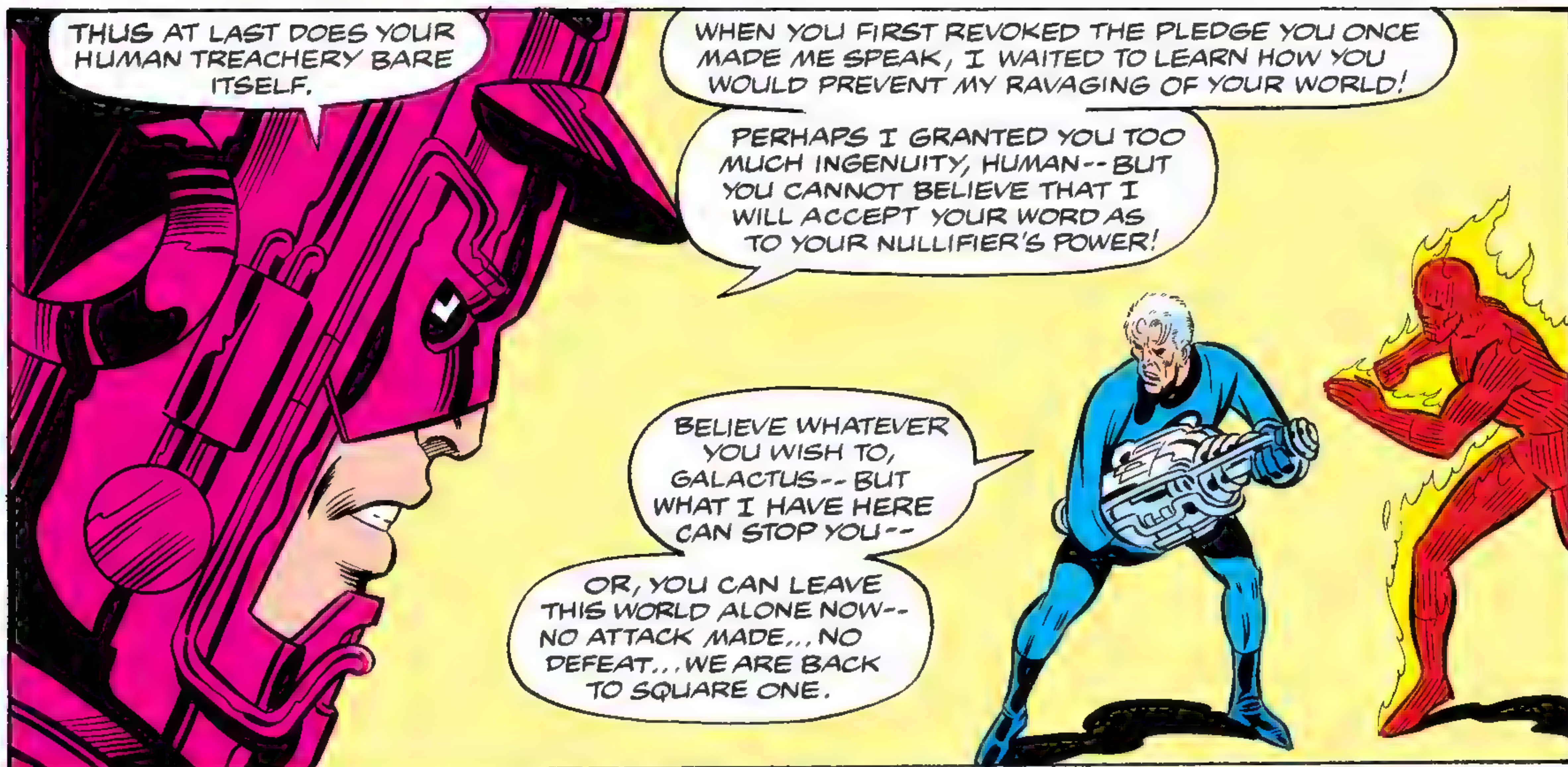
SWIFTLY, THE MOBILE COMPUTER ENTERS THE BAXTER BUILDING AND MAKES ITS WAY TO THE CRYOGENIC CHAMBER WHERE SUE RICHARDS LIES FROZEN IN STATE.









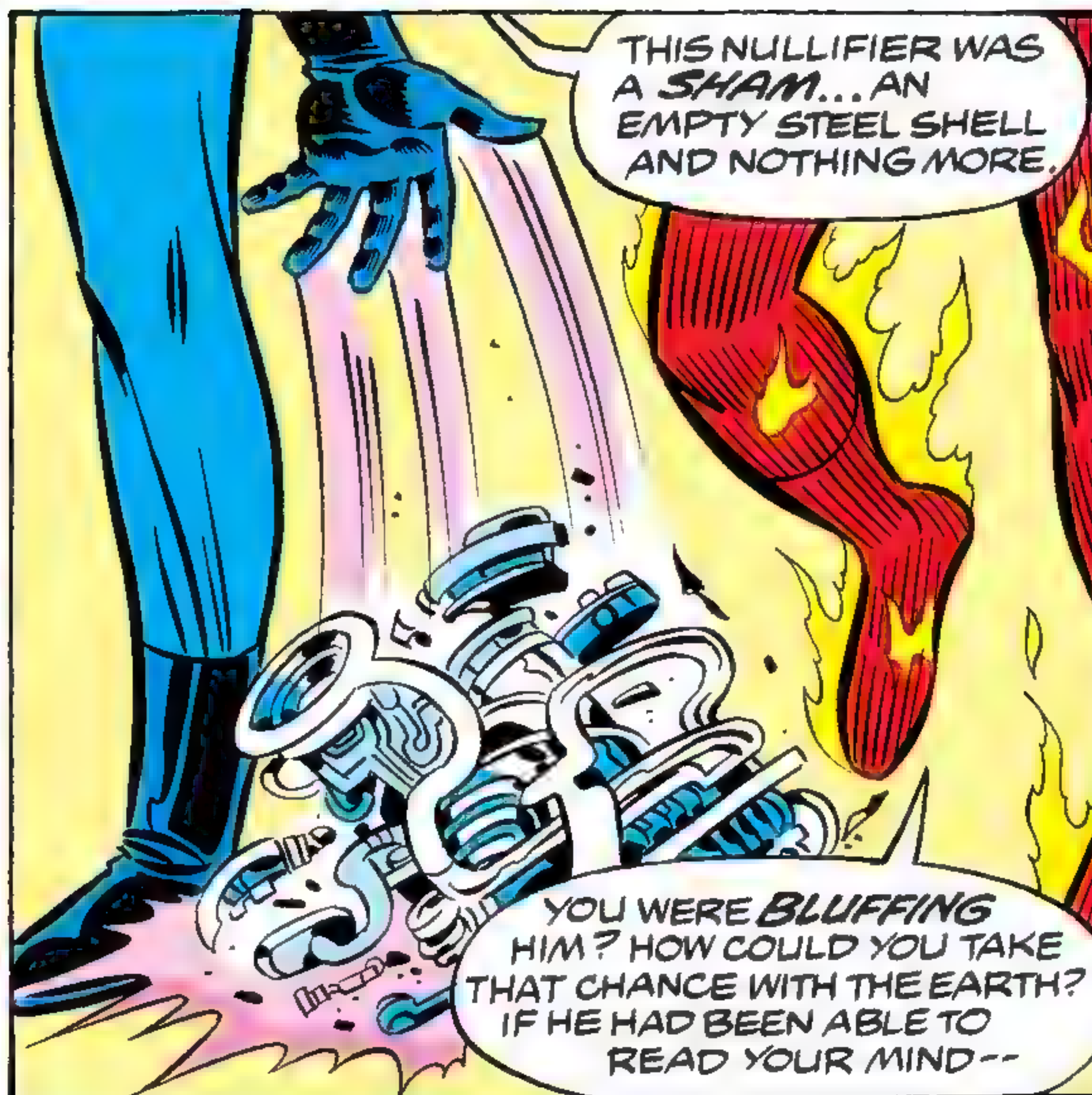




REED! HE'S GONE! I ALMOST CAN'T BELIEVE THAT! HOW DID YOU BUILD ANOTHER NULLIFIER SO QUICKLY?

HOW COULD YOU BE SURE GALACTUS HAD THE MACHINERY AVAILABLE TO DO IT?

I DIDN'T, JOHNNY.



THIS NULLIFIER WAS A *SHAM*... AN EMPTY STEEL SHELL AND NOTHING MORE.

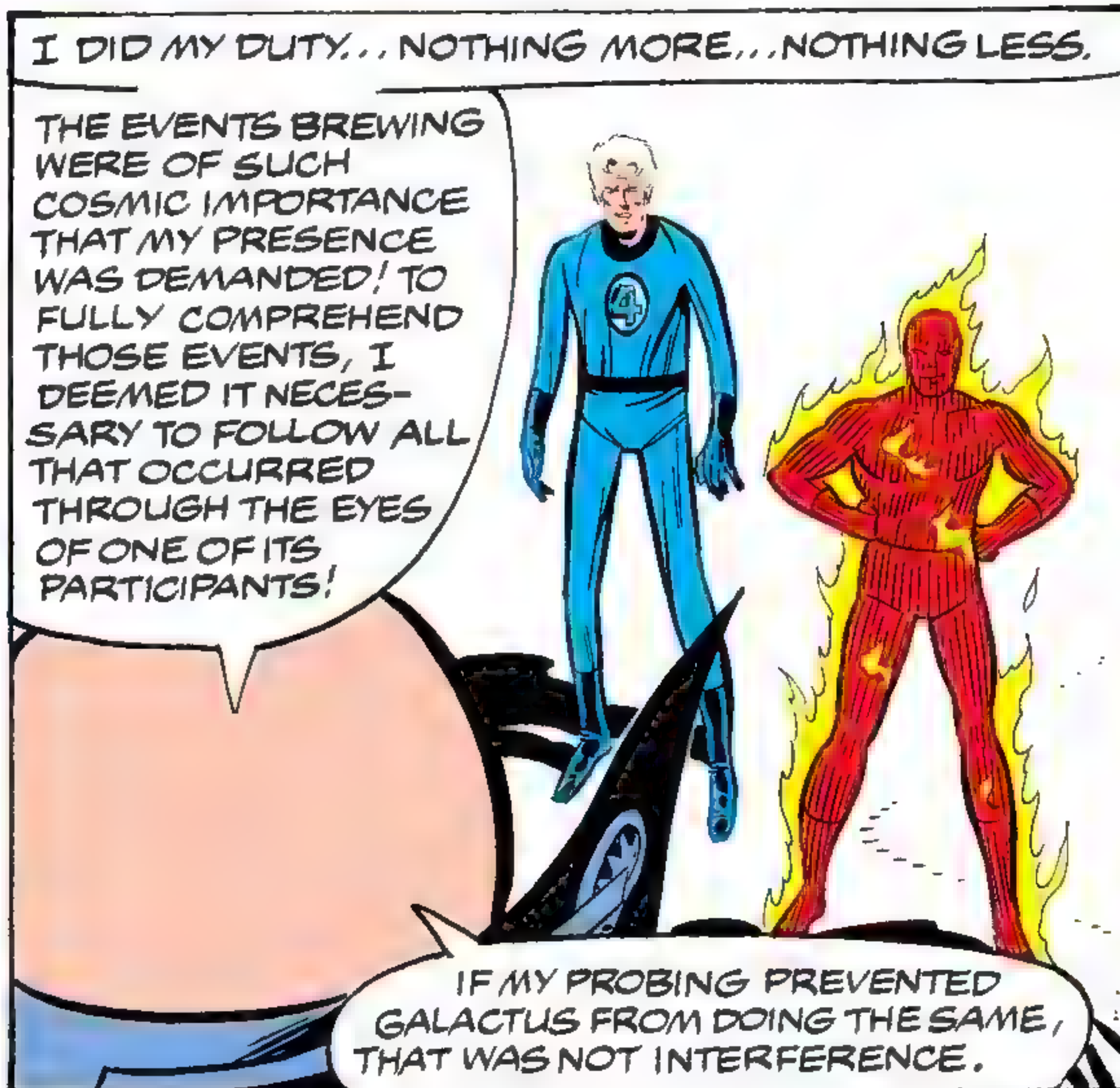
YOU WERE *BLUFFING* HIM? HOW COULD YOU TAKE THAT CHANCE WITH THE EARTH? IF HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO READ YOUR MIND--



YOUR LEADER KNEW GALACTUS COULD NOT READ HIS THOUGHTS... BECAUSE I WAS ALREADY MONITORING THEM!

MY CONSTANT PROBING CREATED AN *INTER-FERENCE* GALACTUS COULD NOT PENETRATE!

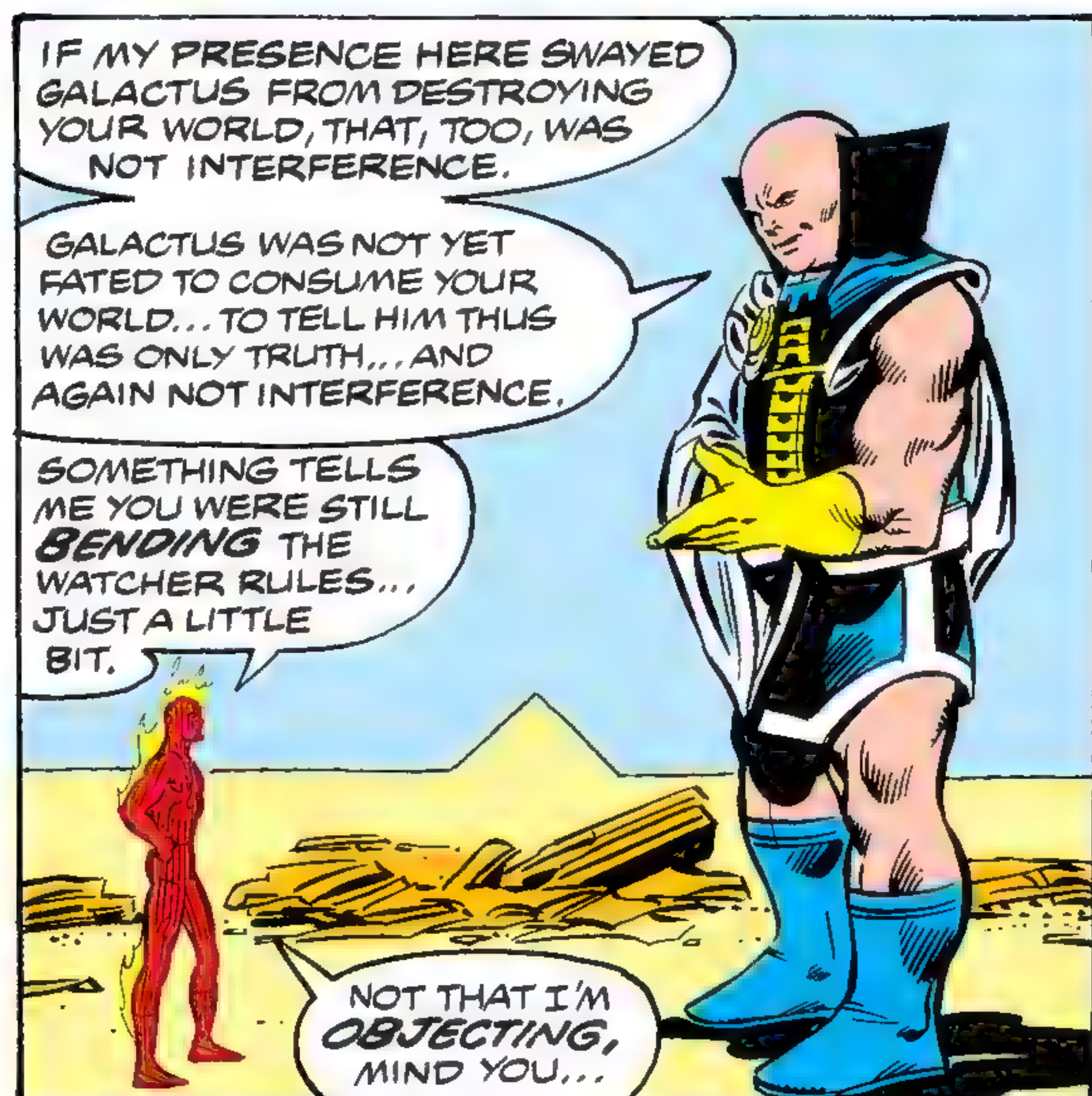
YOU? BUT I THOUGHT YOU COULDN'T INTERFERE... I THOUGHT--



I DID MY DUTY... NOTHING MORE... NOTHING LESS.

THE EVENTS BREWING WERE OF SUCH COSMIC IMPORTANCE THAT MY PRESENCE WAS DEMANDED! TO FULLY COMPREHEND THOSE EVENTS, I DEEMED IT NECESSARY TO FOLLOW ALL THAT OCCURRED THROUGH THE EYES OF ONE OF ITS PARTICIPANTS!

IF MY PROBING PREVENTED GALACTUS FROM DOING THE SAME, THAT WAS NOT INTERFERENCE.

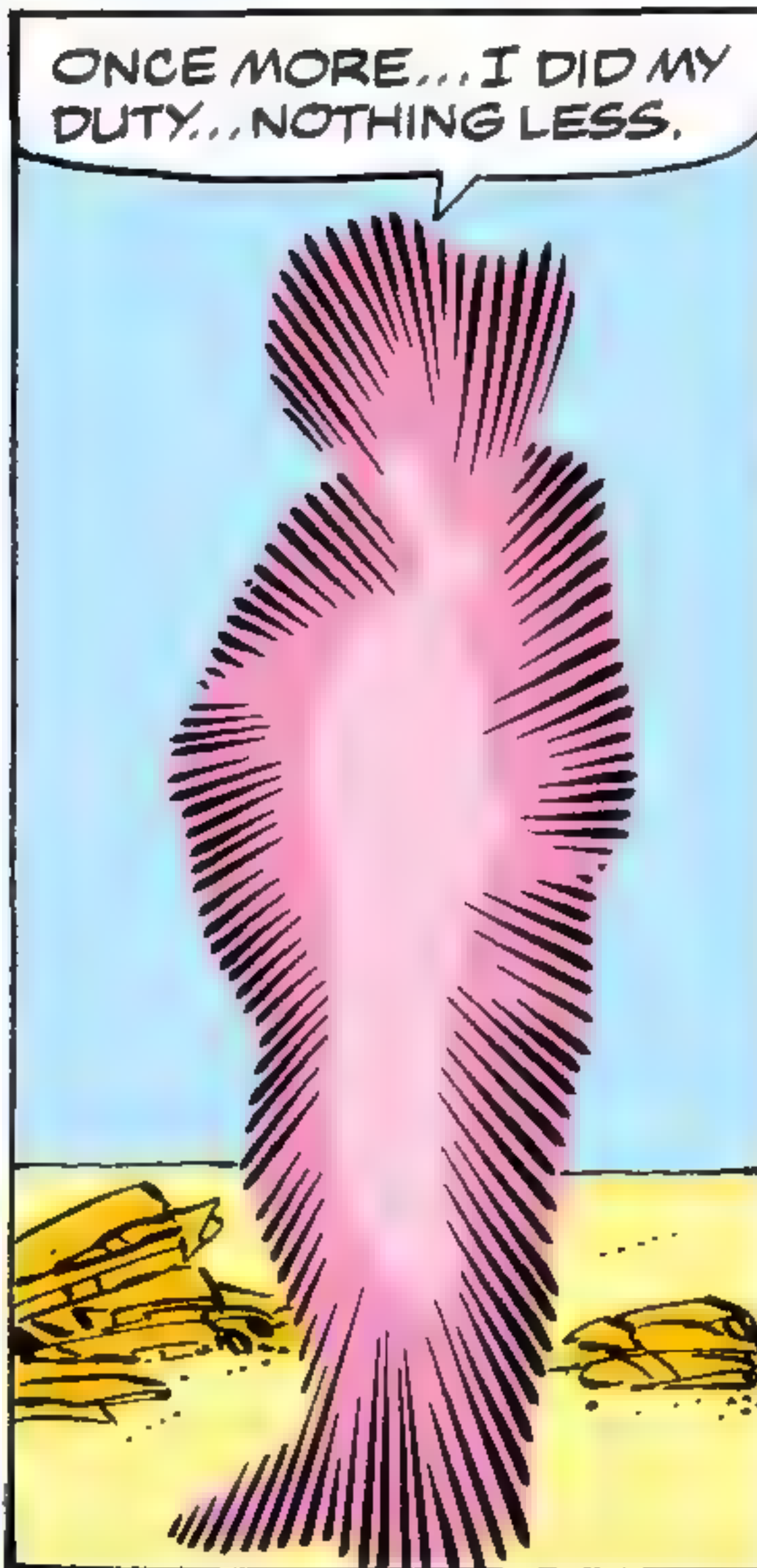


IF MY PRESENCE HERE SWAYED GALACTUS FROM DESTROYING YOUR WORLD, THAT, TOO, WAS NOT INTERFERENCE.

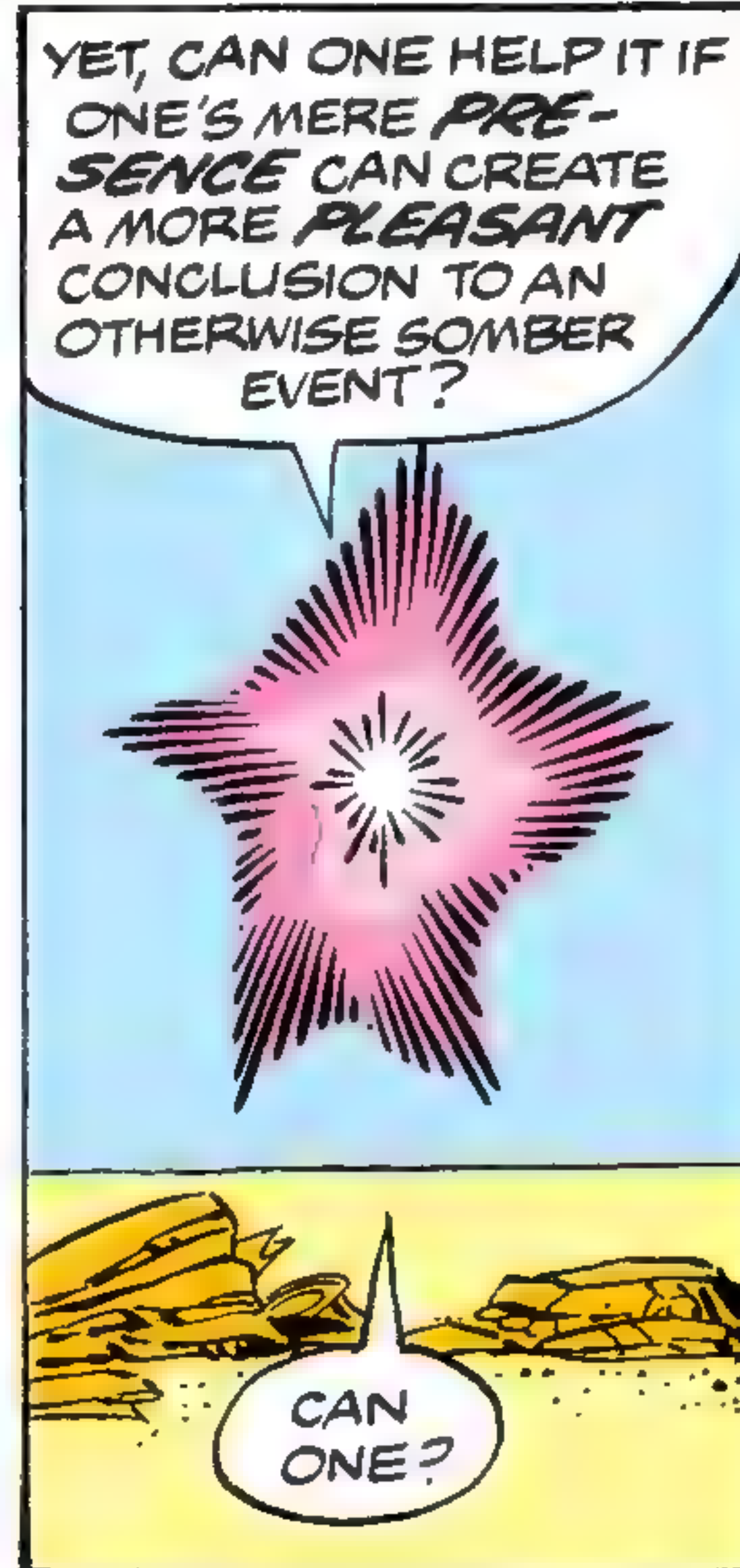
GALACTUS WAS NOT YET FATED TO CONSUME YOUR WORLD... TO TELL HIM THUS WAS ONLY TRUTH... AND AGAIN NOT INTERFERENCE.

SOMETHING TELLS ME YOU WERE STILL *BENDING* THE WATCHER RULES... JUST A LITTLE BIT.

NOT THAT I'M *OBJECTING*, MIND YOU...



ONCE MORE... I DID MY DUTY... NOTHING LESS.



YET, CAN ONE HELP IT IF ONE'S MERE *PRE-SENCE* CAN CREATE A MORE *PLEASANT* CONCLUSION TO AN OTHERWISE SOMBER EVENT?

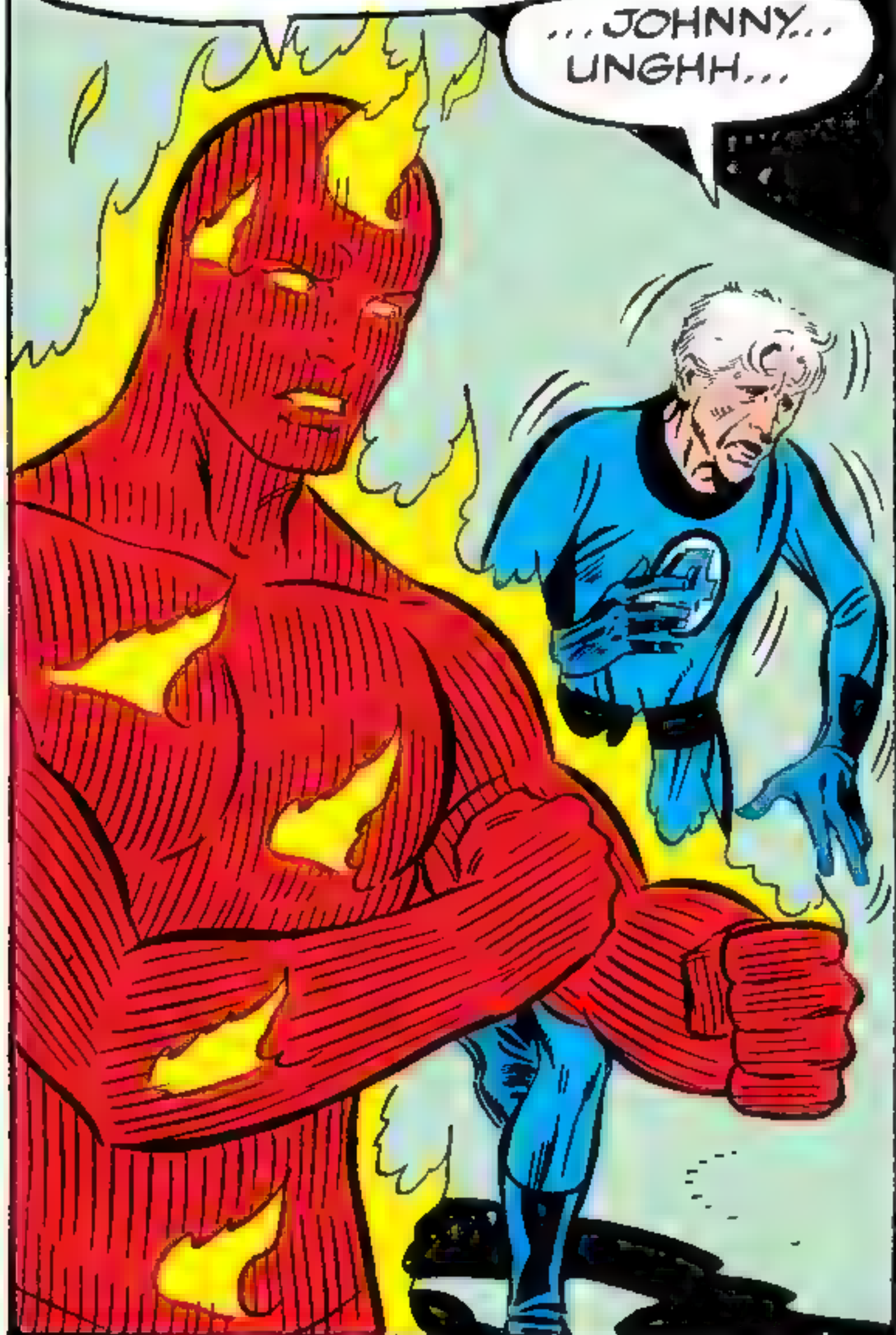
CAN ONE?

THE AWESOME WATCHER VANISHES FROM SIGHT WITHIN A NIMBUS OF LIGHT. FOR LONG MOMENTS THERE IS ONLY SILENCE. AND THEN...

YOU KNEW IT ALL ALONG, REED. YOU KNEW WHAT YOU WERE DOING... AND YOU COULDN'T TELL US WITHOUT BLOWING EVERYTHING TO GALACTUS!

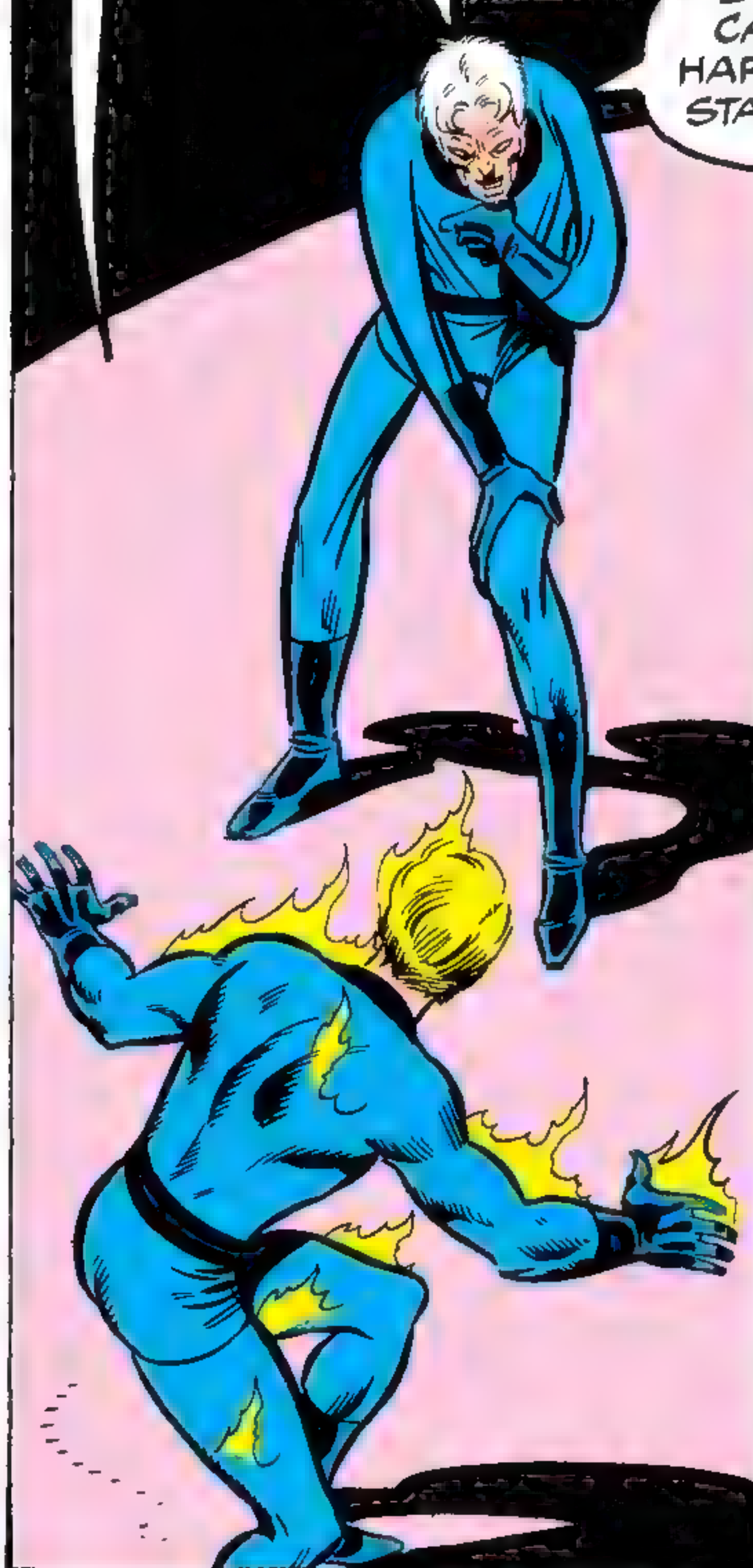
GOOD GRIEF... AND BEN AND I WERE SO CERTAIN THAT YOU HAD--

...JOHNNY...
UNGH...



REED! ... JOHNNY... EVERYTHING GOING BLURRY... GETTING DARK!

I--I CAN HARDLY STAND...



SON! IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME... BUT... BUT YOU'VE GOT TO TRY TO SAVE YOUR SISTER AND BEN!

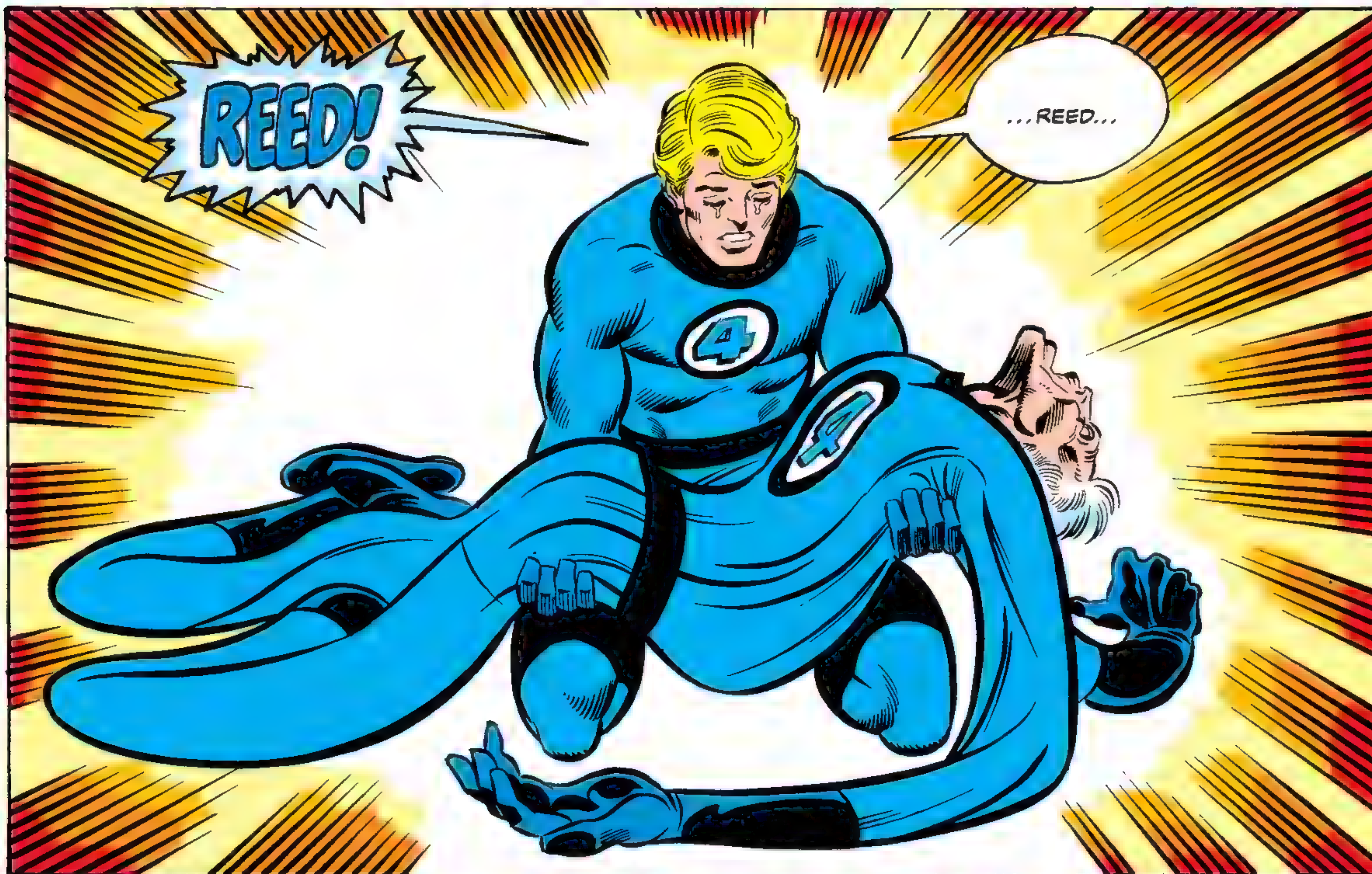
REED!

PROMISE ME, JOHNNY...
PROMISE ME YOU'LL TRY!



REED!

...REED...



NEXT ISSUE: AND THEN THERE WAS ONE...

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FANTASTIC FOUR®

...AND
THEN
THERE
WAS
ONE!



Brace and Simon

Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**

MARV WOLFGAN, JOHN BYRNE, JOE SINNOTT, JOHN COSTANZA, CARL GAFFORD, JIM SHOOTER
scripts/edits pencils finishes letterer colorist cons. ed.

JOHNNY STORM'S TEARS
FLOW FREELY NOW, AND
HIS MUFFLED CRIES ECHO
THROUGH THE LONG EMPTY
HALLS OF THE MIDTOWN
HEADQUARTERS OF THE
FANTASTIC FOUR.

HE IS ALONE FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN HIS SHORT
LIFE. TRULY ALONE IN SUCH
A WAY THAT ONLY A MAN
WHOSE WHOLE FAMILY WAS
INSTANTLY WIPED OUT
COULD HOPE TO EVEN
PARTIALLY UNDERSTAND.

FOR JOHNNY'S FAMILY
HAS SUDDENLY, DRAMATIC-
ALLY COME TO AN END...
PERHAPS NOT IN
DEATH, BUT IN ANOTHER
MANNER MOST CERTAINLY
AS HEART-RENDING...

WHY? WHY
COULDN'T I DO
ANYTHING TO
SAVE YOU?

WHY WASN'T
I AT YOUR
SIDE WHEN YOU
NEEDED ME
THE MOST?

...and
then
there
was--**ONE!**

WHEN THAT BLASTED **SKRULL** SHOT YOU WITH THAT **AGING RAY**, I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE... MAYBE TOGETHER WE COULD HAVE **STOPPED** HIM FROM--

HOLD IT... JUST HOLD IT THERE ONE MINUTE!

SUE, REED AND BEN WERE **TURNED OLD**... THEY DIDN'T AGE NATURALLY--

IF SOMETHING COULD DO THAT TO THEM, THEN WHY CAN'T SOMETHING **ELSE** MAKE THEM **YOUNG** AGAIN?

REED WOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO IF HE COULD SPEAK... BUT I DARE NOT REMOVE HIM FROM THAT CHAMBER... NOT EVEN FOR AN INSTANT.

STILL, REED ALWAYS SAID THERE WAS SOMEONE ELSE JUST AS BRILLIANT, JUST AS--

HELLO? THIS IS JOHNNY STORM OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR--

IT'S URGENT, I MUST SPEAK WITH **TONY STARK**. PLEASE, IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!

I'M **SORRY**, MR. STORM, BUT MR. STARK ISN'T ANYWHERE NEAR... FRANKLY, I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO REACH HIM.

STARK

NUTS! THERE GOES MY ONE RESIDENT GENIUS... PROBABLY OUT GALLAVANTING WITH SOME PRETTY GIRL, IF I KNOW MY PLAYBOYS.

WAITASEC... MAYBE HIS BODYGUARD, IRON MAN, KNOWS WHERE HE'S GONE OFF TO.

AND THAT MEANS, **AVENGERS MANSION**, HERE I COME!

JARVIS, I'M LOOKING FOR TONY STARK, OR IRON MAN, OR SOMEBODY--

I'M SORRY, SIR, BUT THE AVENGERS HAVE ALL GONE OFF ON ONE MISSION OR ANOTHER.

BUT I DID HEAR SOMETHING ABOUT MISTER STARK AND **SHIELD**.

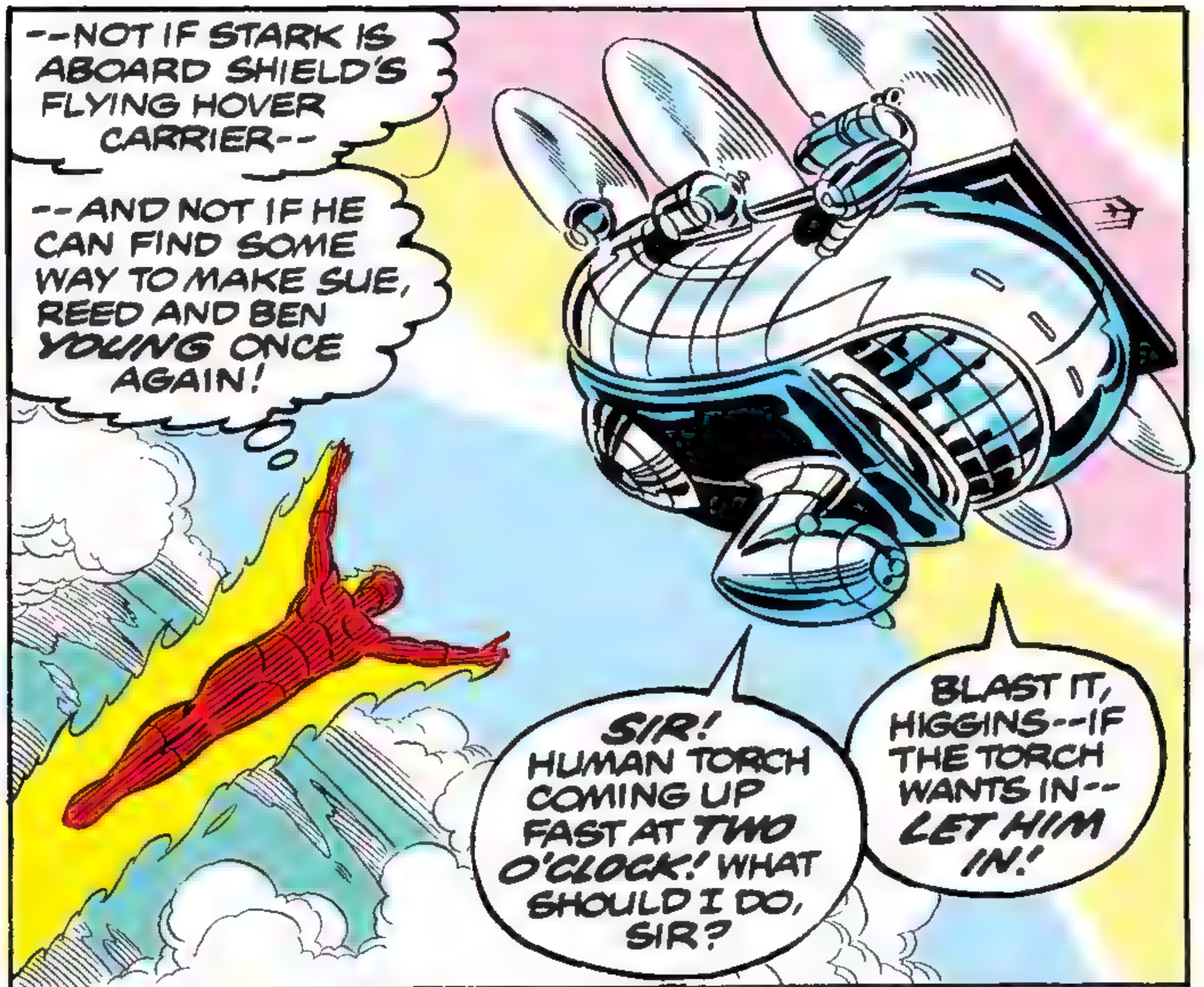
JARVY, IF YOU'VE POINTED ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, I'M GONNA BRING YOU BACK A BIG, FAT **COOKIE!**

NO **NUTS**, SIR, I'M ALLERGIC TO NUTS!



FUNNY, I THOUGHT I HAD HEARD SOMETHING ABOUT STARK AND SHIELD AT ODDS OR SOMETHING.

WELL, WHATEVER THE CASE, IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER--



--NOT IF STARK IS ABOARD SHIELD'S FLYING HOVER CARRIER--

--AND NOT IF HE CAN FIND SOME WAY TO MAKE SUE, REED AND BEN YOUNG ONCE AGAIN!

SIR! HUMAN TORCH COMING UP FAST AT TWO O'CLOCK! WHAT SHOULD I DO, SIR?

BLAST IT, HIGGINS--IF THE TORCH WANTS IN--LET HIM IN!



WELL, WELL, SHOULD I TAKE OFF MY HAT AN' FEEL HONORED!?? A REAL, LIVE SUPER HERO IS COMING FOR A VISIT!

SLUMMING, TORCH?

KNOCK IT OFF, DUGAN. THIS IS SERIOUS!



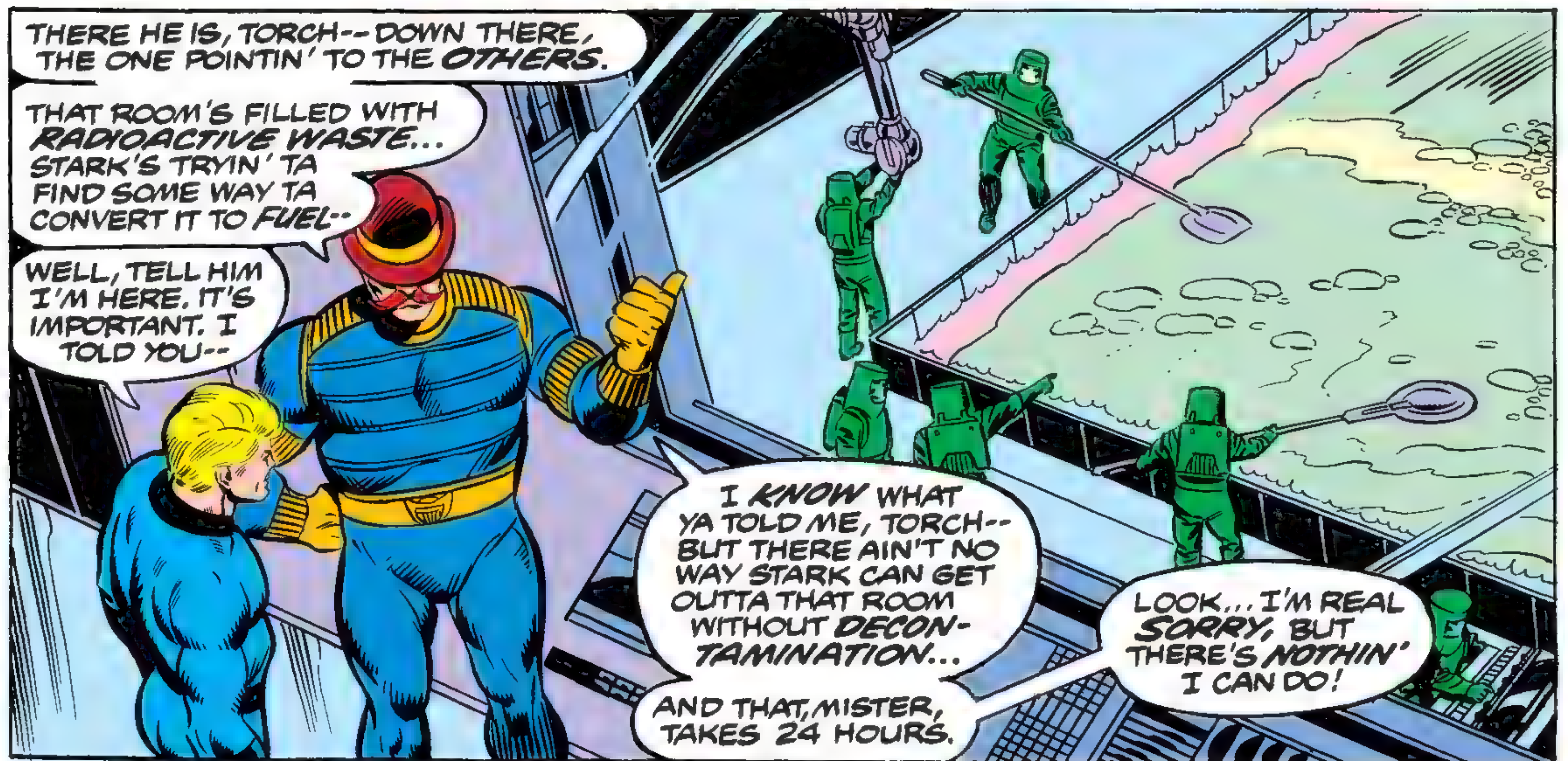
...ANYWAY, I DIDN'T HAVE ANY PLACE LEFT TO TURN. STARK'S GOT TO BE HERE.

YEAH, TORCH, HE'S HERE... BUT DON'T GO RAISIN' YER HOPES OR NOTHIN'.



STARK'S INVOLVED WITH TOP PRIORITY SECRET STUFF, BUT YOU GOT CLEARANCE, S'COME ON... I'LL SHOW YOU WHY HE AIN'T GOIN' NOWHERE!

HUNH?



THERE HE IS, TORCH-- DOWN THERE, THE ONE POINTIN' TO THE OTHERS.

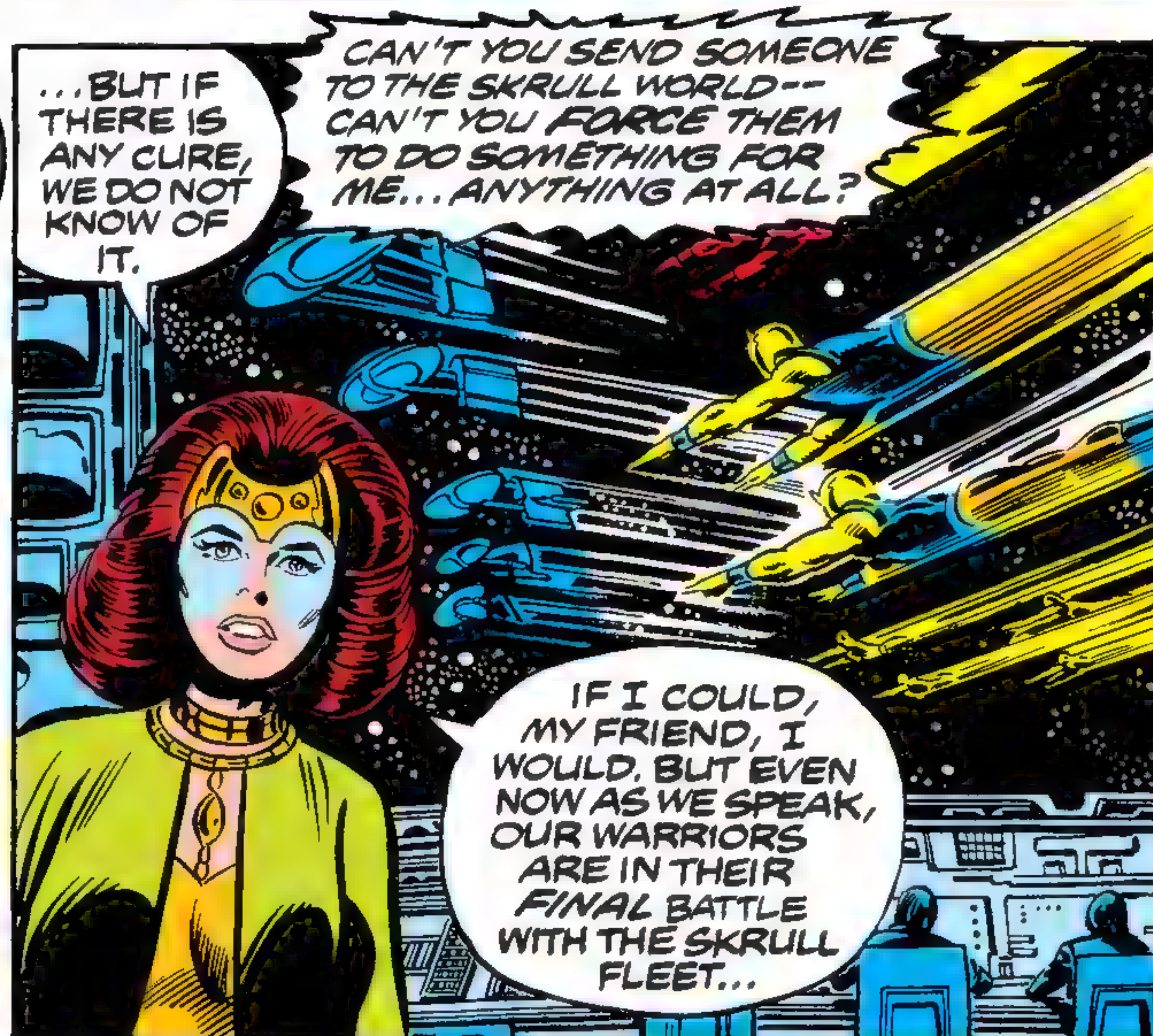
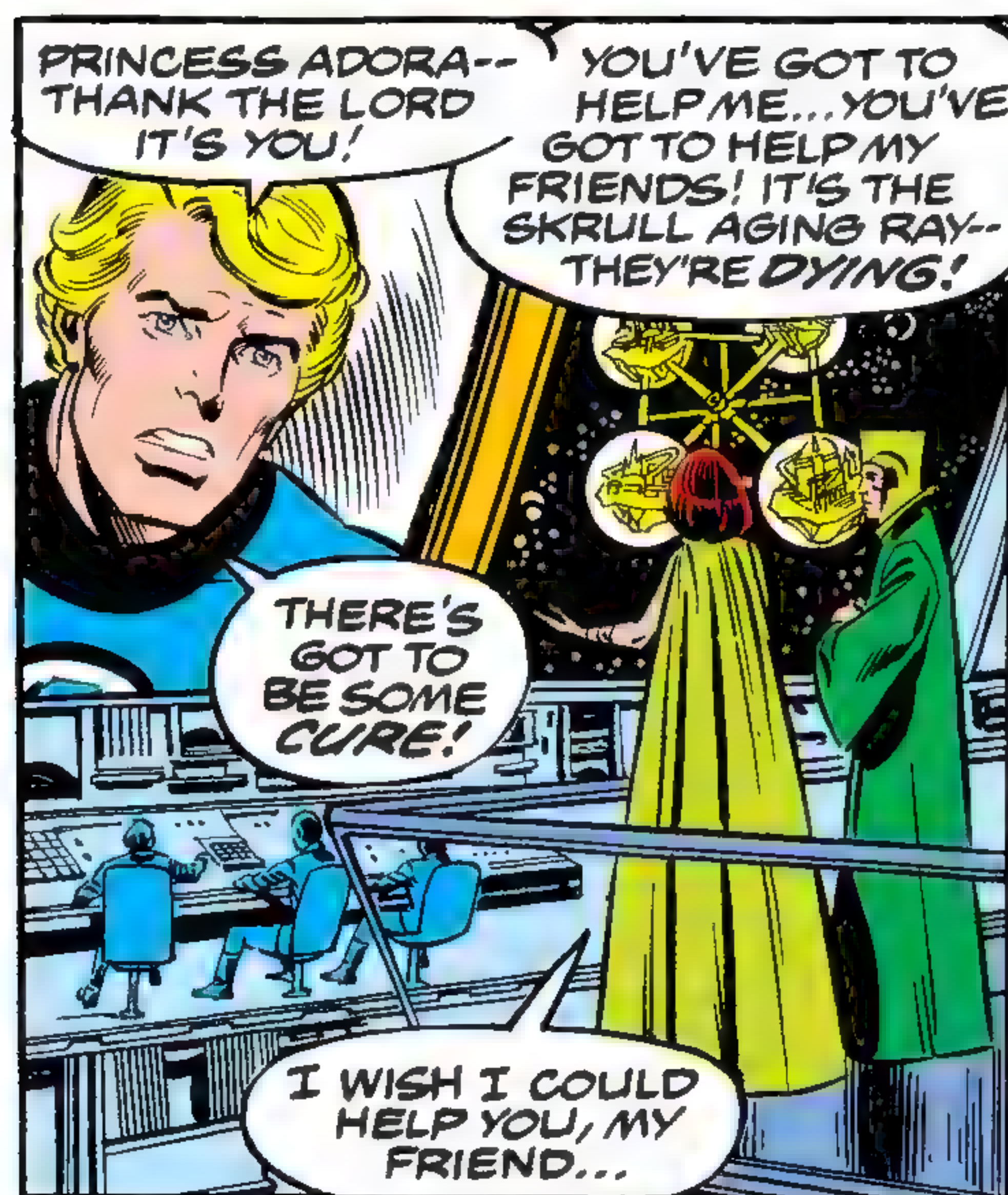
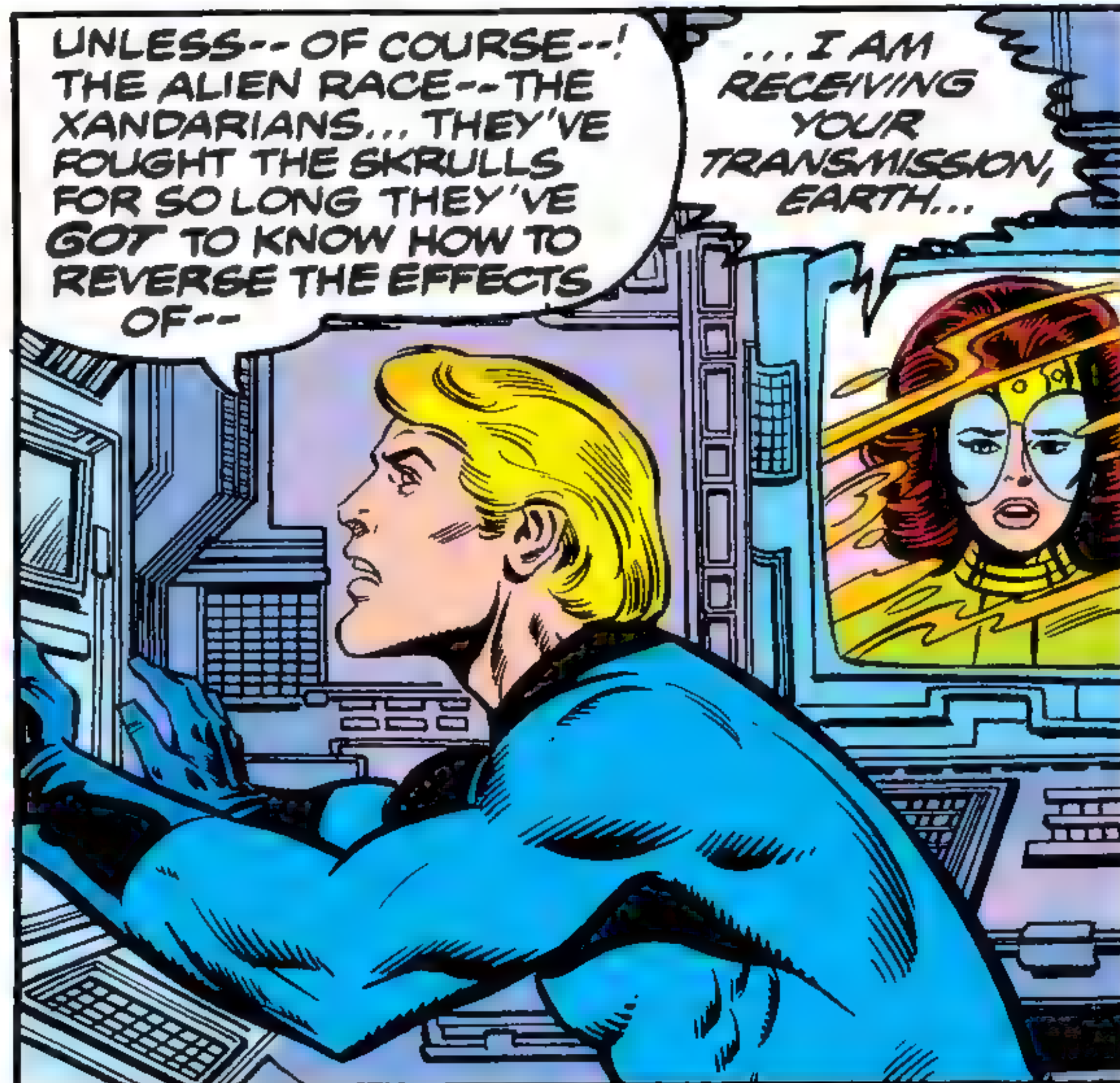
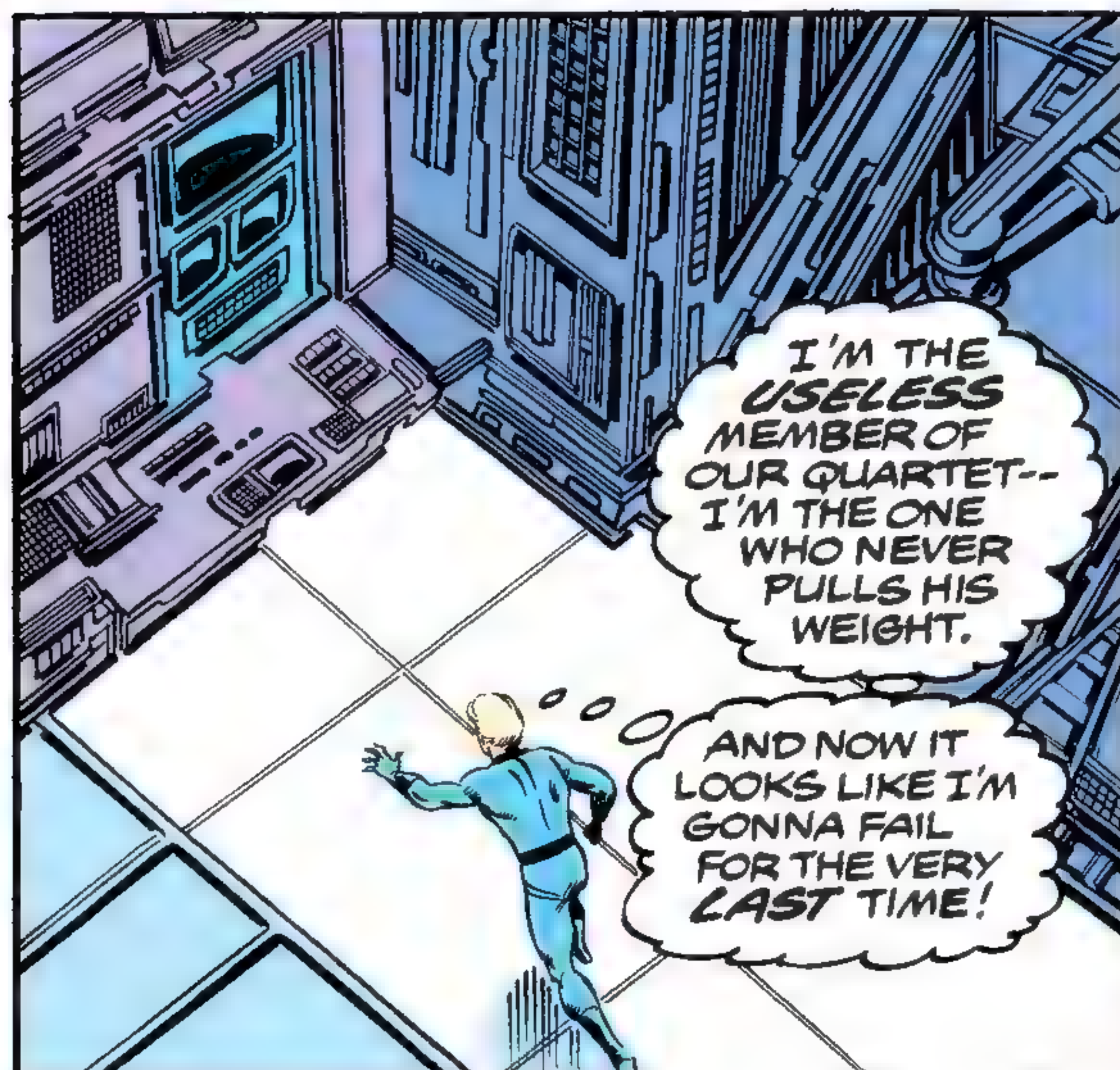
THAT ROOM'S FILLED WITH RADIOACTIVE WASTE... STARK'S TRYIN' TA FIND SOME WAY TA CONVERT IT TO FUEL--

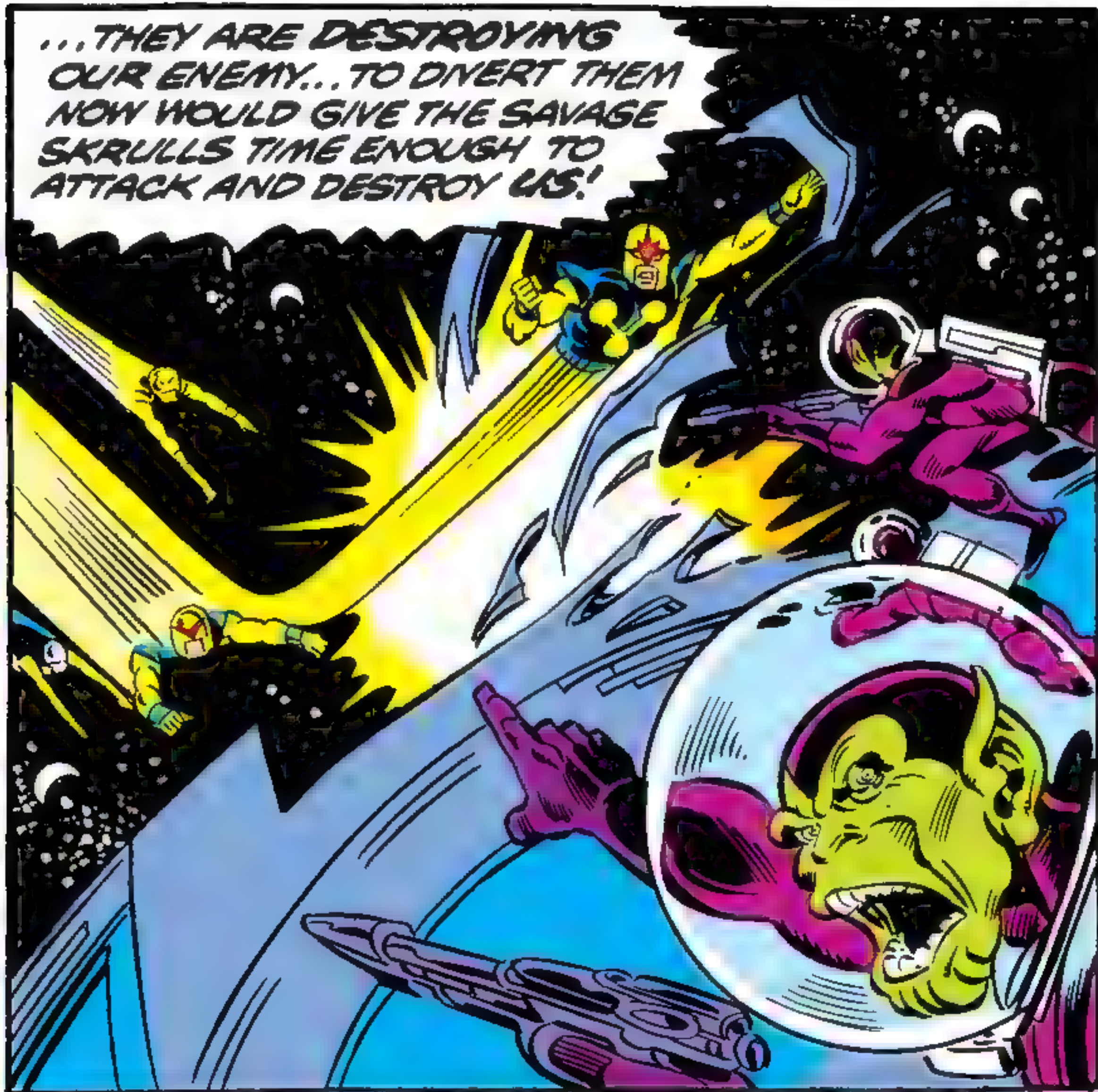
WELL, TELL HIM I'M HERE. IT'S IMPORTANT. I TOLD YOU--

I KNOW WHAT YA TOLD ME, TORCH-- BUT THERE AIN'T NO WAY STARK CAN GET OUTTA THAT ROOM WITHOUT DECONTAMINATION...

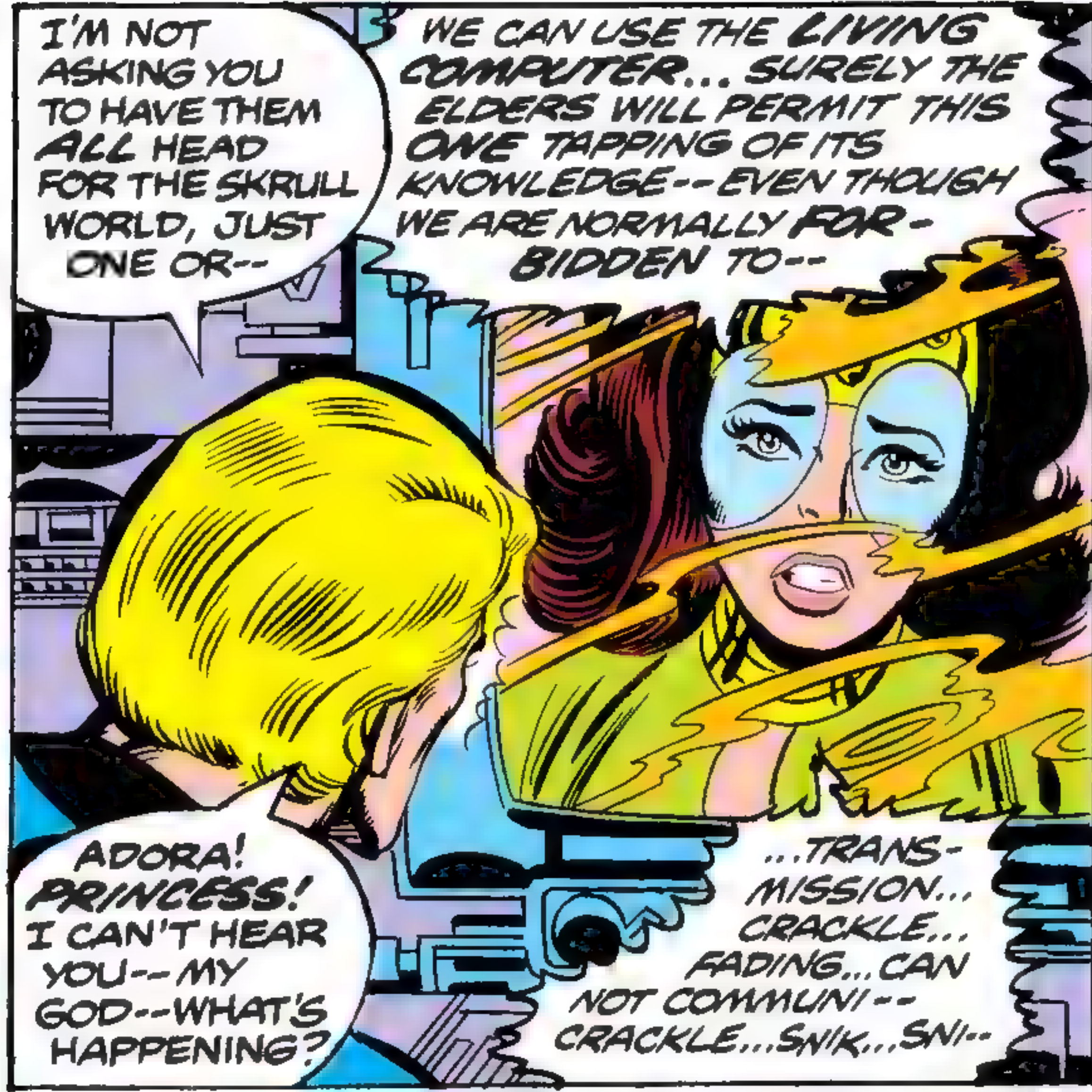
AND THAT, MISTER, TAKES 24 HOURS.

LOOK... I'M REAL SORRY, BUT THERE'S NOTHIN' I CAN DO!





...THEY ARE DESTROYING
OUR ENEMY... TO DIVERT THEM
NOW WOULD GIVE THE SAVAGE
SKRULLS TIME ENOUGH TO
ATTACK AND DESTROY US!

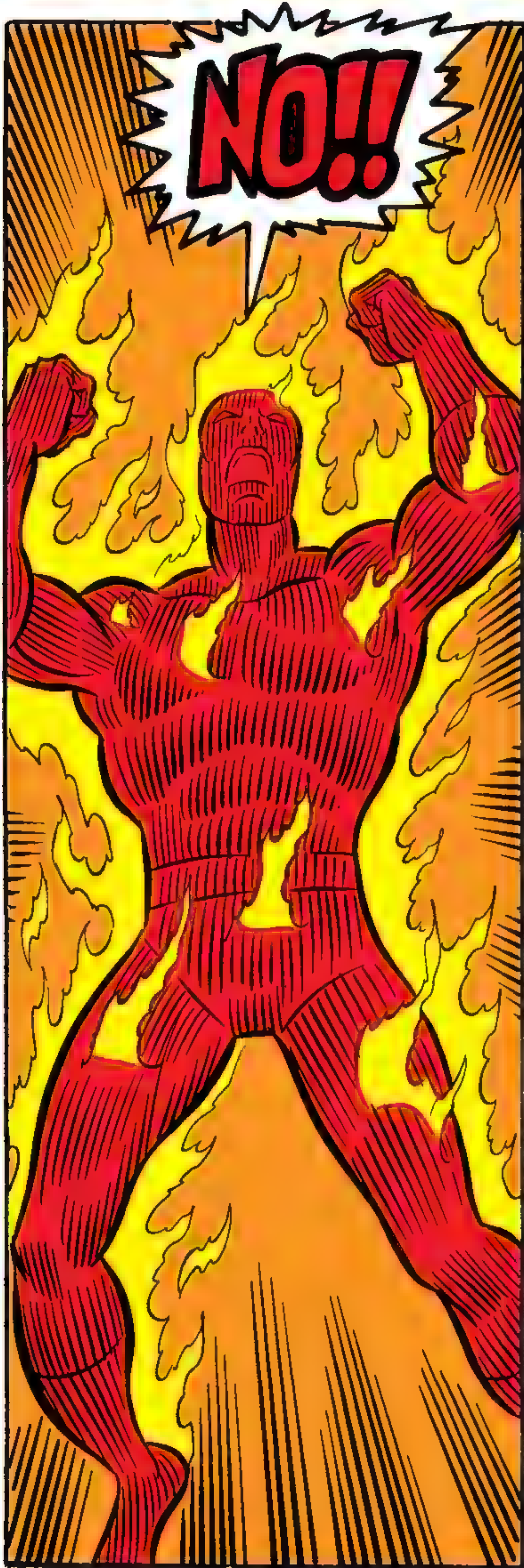


I'M NOT
ASKING YOU
TO HAVE THEM
ALL HEAD
FOR THE SKRULL
WORLD, JUST
ONE OR--

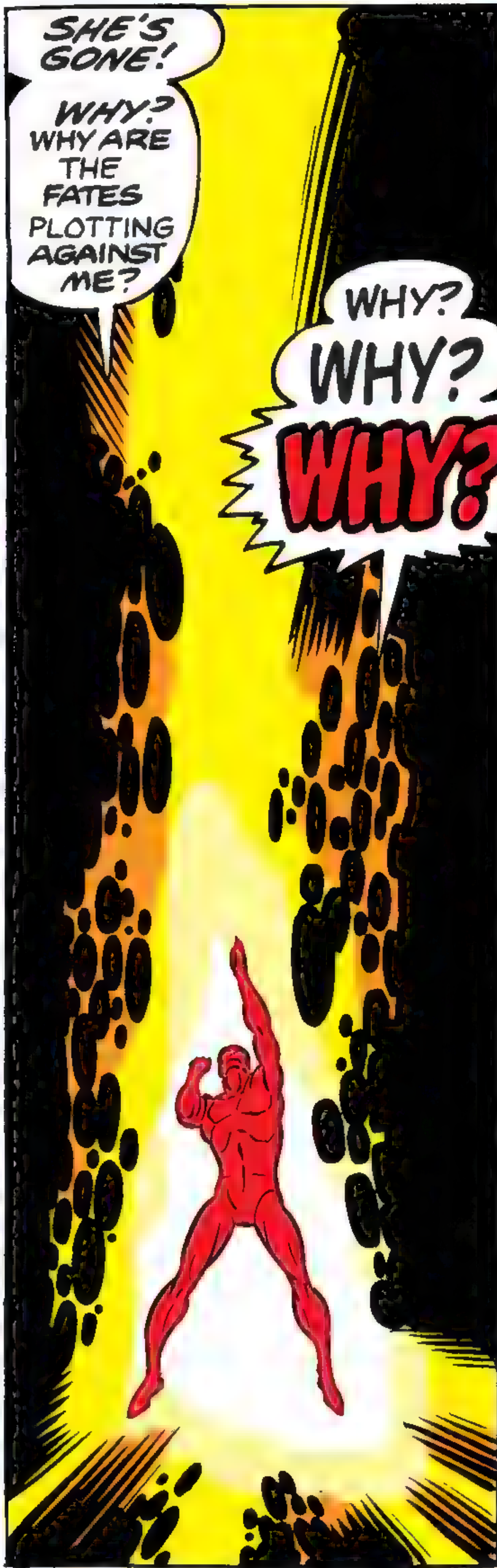
WE CAN USE THE LIVING
COMPUTER... SURELY THE
ELDERS WILL PERMIT THIS
ONE TAPPING OF ITS
KNOWLEDGE-- EVEN THOUGH
WE ARE NORMALLY FOR-
BIDDEN TO--

ADORA!
PRINCESS!
I CAN'T HEAR
YOU-- MY
GOD--WHAT'S
HAPPENING?

...TRANS-
MISSION...
CRACKLE...
FADING... CAN
NOT COMMUNI--
CRACKLE... SNIK... SNI--



NO!!



SHE'S
GONE!

WHY?
WHY ARE
THE
FATES
PLOTING
AGAINST
ME?

WHY?
WHY?
WHY?

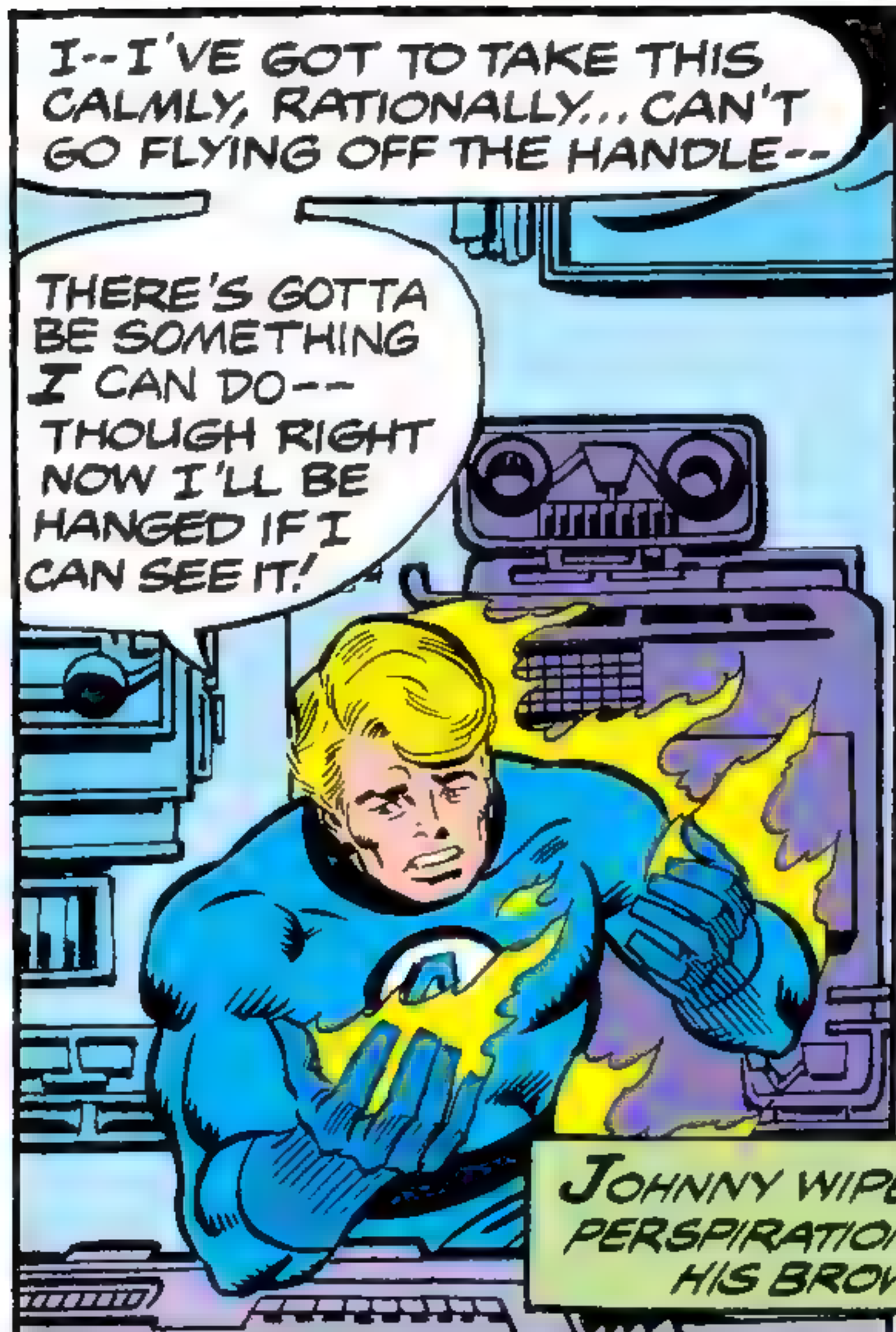


WHAT'S GOING
ON IN THE
BAXTER
BUILDING? IT'S
GLOWING... LIKE
IT'S GOING TO
EXPLODE!

THOSE
PEOPLE
ARE
DANGER-
OUS!
WHY
DOESN'T
THE CITY
DO SOME-
THING
ABOUT
THEM?

I--I'VE GOT TO TAKE THIS CALMLY, RATIONALLY... CAN'T GO FLYING OFF THE HANDLE--

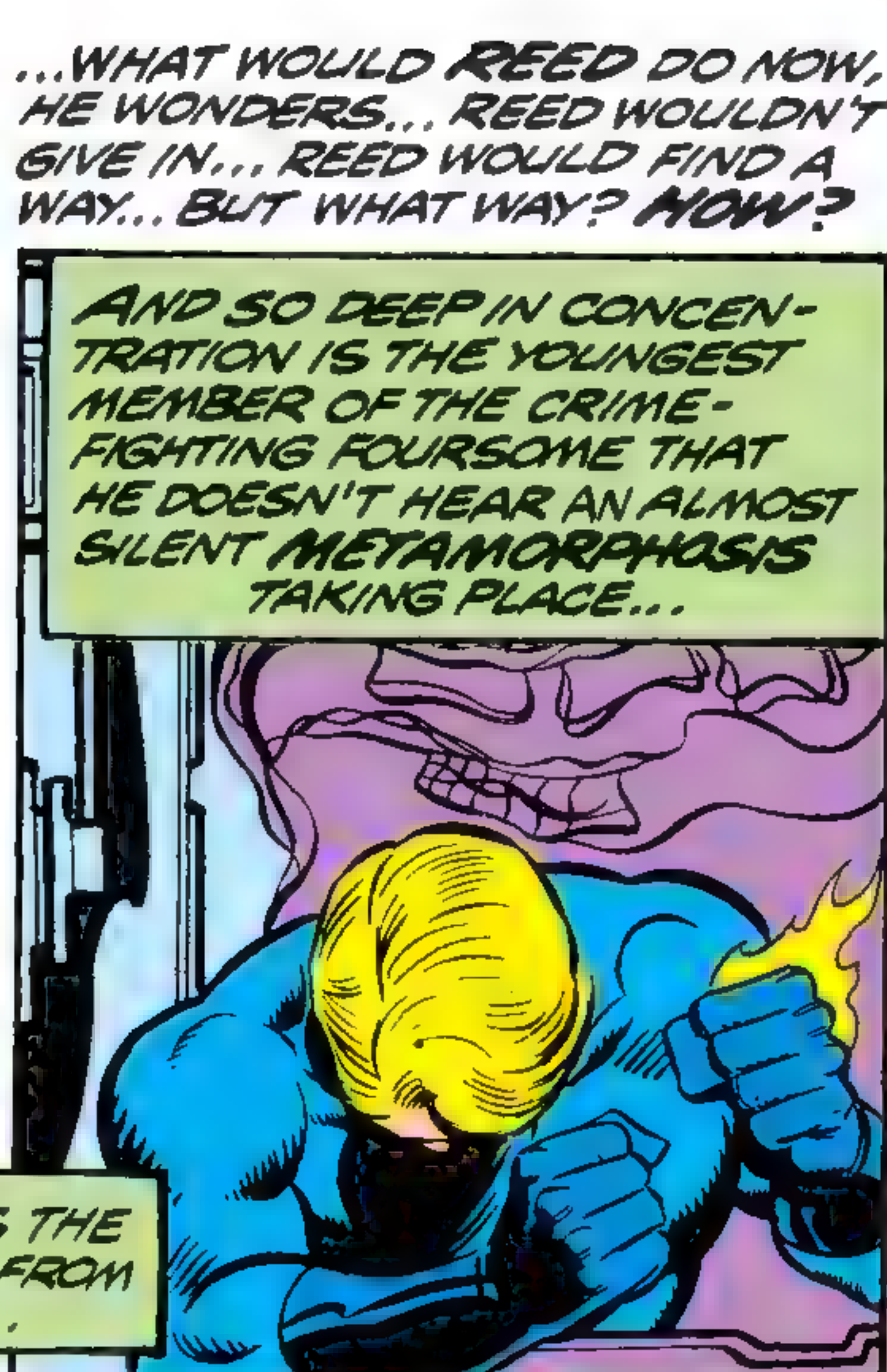
THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING I CAN DO-- THOUGH RIGHT NOW I'LL BE HANGED IF I CAN SEE IT!



JOHNNY WIPES THE PERSPIRATION FROM HIS BROW...

...WHAT WOULD REED DO NOW, HE WONDERS... REED WOULDN'T GIVE IN... REED WOULD FIND A WAY... BUT WHAT WAY? NOW?

AND SO DEEP IN CONCENTRATION IS THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF THE CRIME-FIGHTING FOURSOME THAT HE DOESN'T HEAR AN ALMOST SILENT METAMORPHOSIS TAKING PLACE...



NOT UNTIL IT IS ALMOST--



--TOO LATE!!

HUNH? I MUST BE HEARING THINGS. I THOUGHT I-- WHAA?

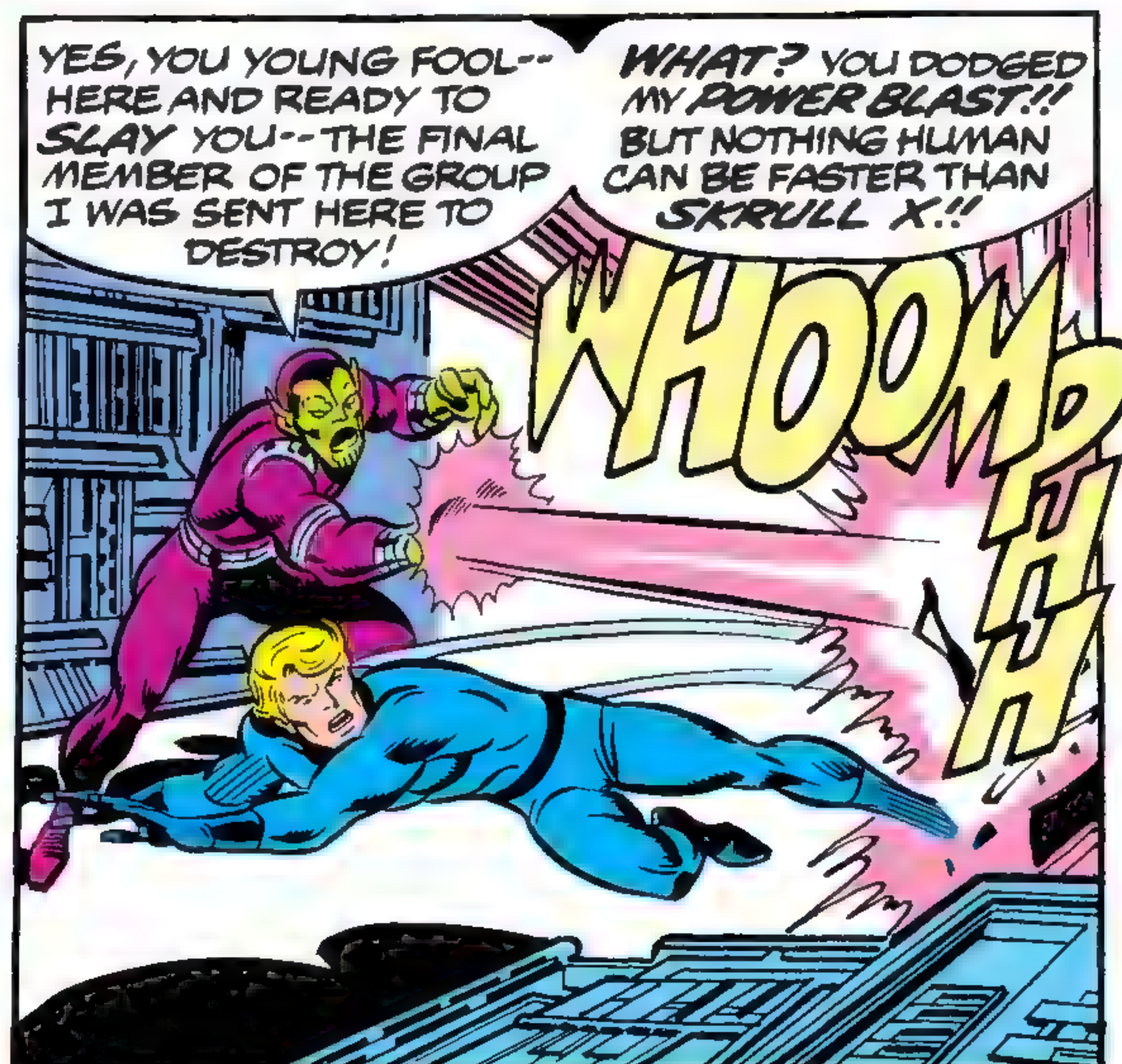
A SKRULL! HERE?!



YES, YOU YOUNG FOOL-- HERE AND READY TO SLAY YOU-- THE FINAL MEMBER OF THE GROUP I WAS SENT HERE TO DESTROY!

WHAT? YOU DODGED MY POWER BLAST!! BUT NOTHING HUMAN CAN BE FASTER THAN SKRULL X!!

WHOOOM!



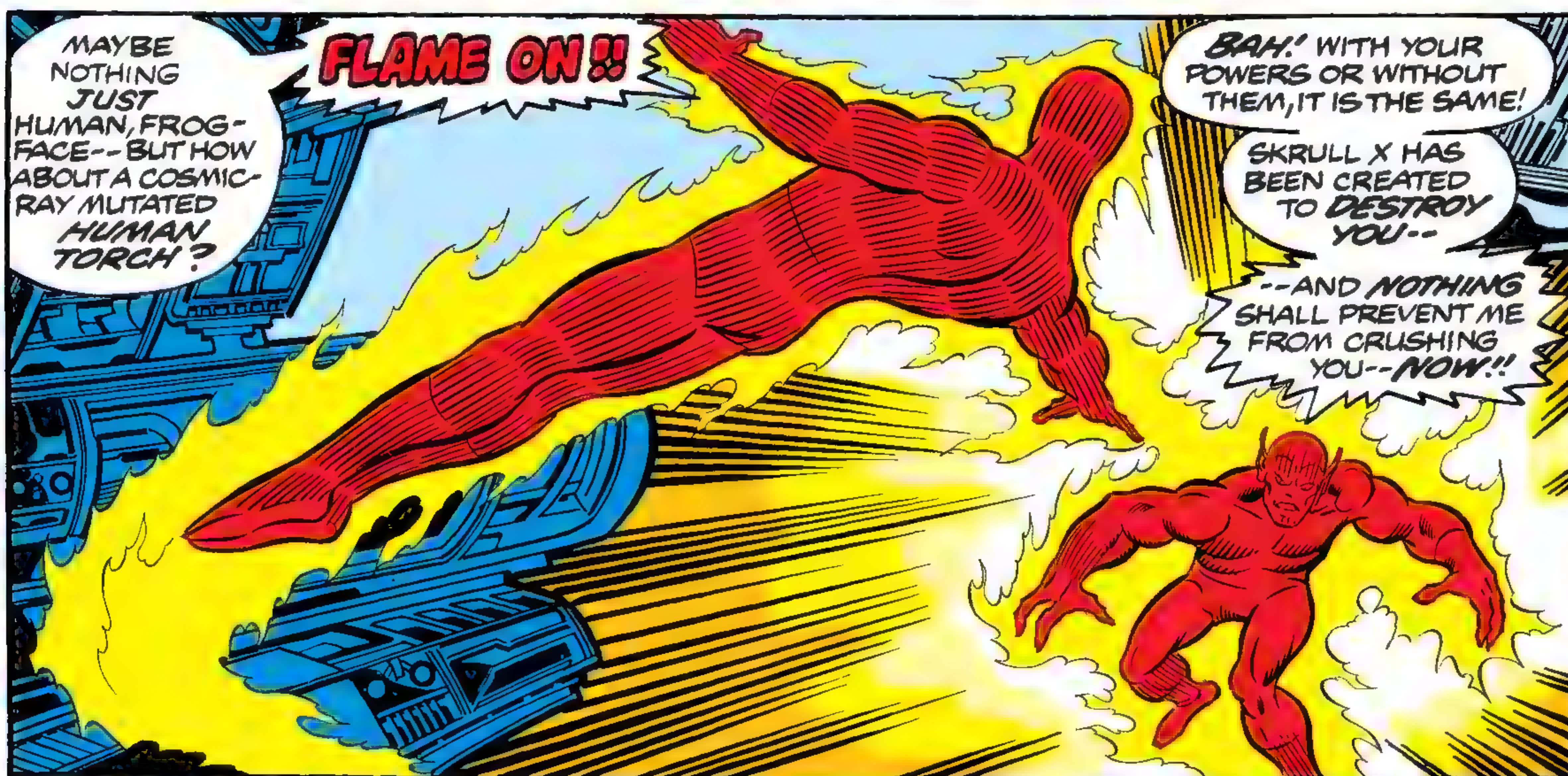
MAYBE NOTHING JUST HUMAN, FROG-FACE-- BUT HOW ABOUT A COSMIC-RAY MUTATED HUMAN TORCH?

FLAME ON!!

BAH! WITH YOUR POWERS OR WITHOUT THEM, IT IS THE SAME!

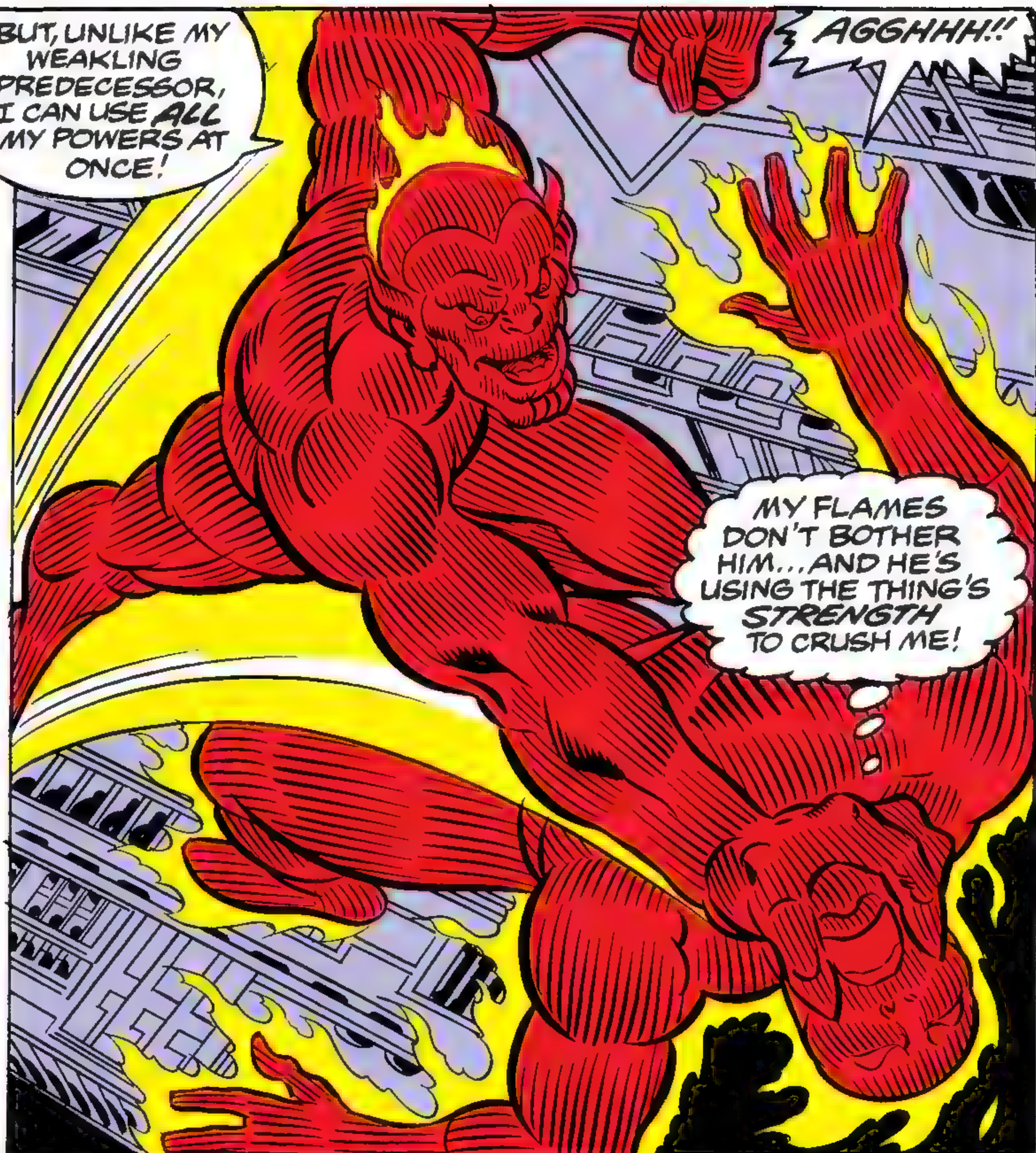
SKRULL X HAS BEEN CREATED TO DESTROY YOU--

--AND NOTHING SHALL PREVENT ME FROM CRUSHING YOU-- NOW!!





YOU SEEM SURPRISED, DOG! YOU DIDN'T SUSPECT THAT LIKE THE SUPER-SKRULL, I HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE ABILITY TO *Duplicate* THE POWERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.



BUT, UNLIKE MY WEAKLING PREDECESSOR, I CAN USE *ALL* MY POWERS AT ONCE!

AGGGHHH!!

MY FLAMES DON'T BOTHER HIM... AND HE'S USING THE THING'S *STRENGTH* TO CRUSH ME!



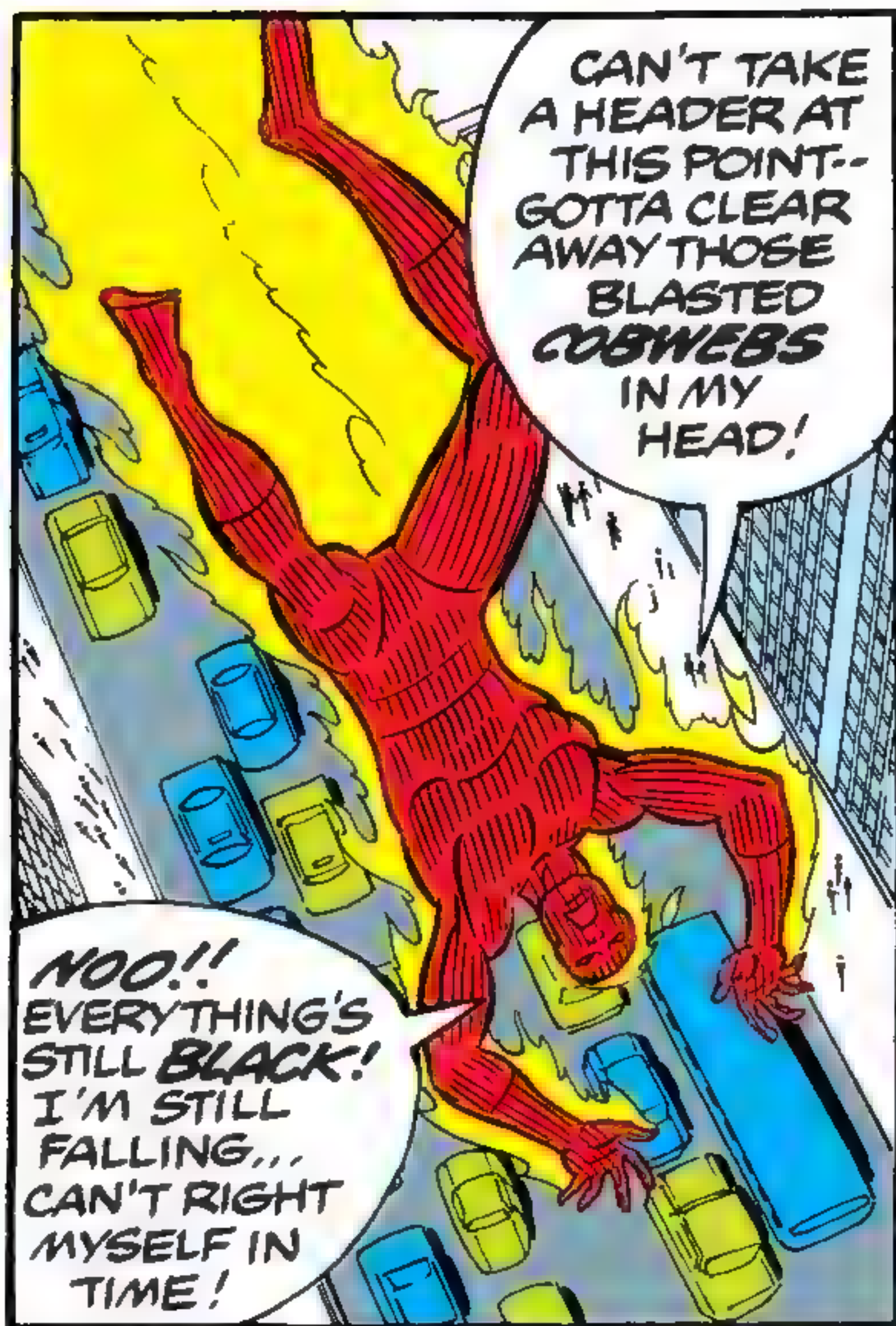
BAH! I WAS TOLD YOU FOUR WOULD PROVIDE ME WITH *SPORT*! INSTEAD, THREE OF YOUR TEAMMATES CAME TO ME ALL BUT DEAD--



--WHILE YOU ARE LITTLE MORE THAN A SIMPERING, POWERLESS *CHILD*!

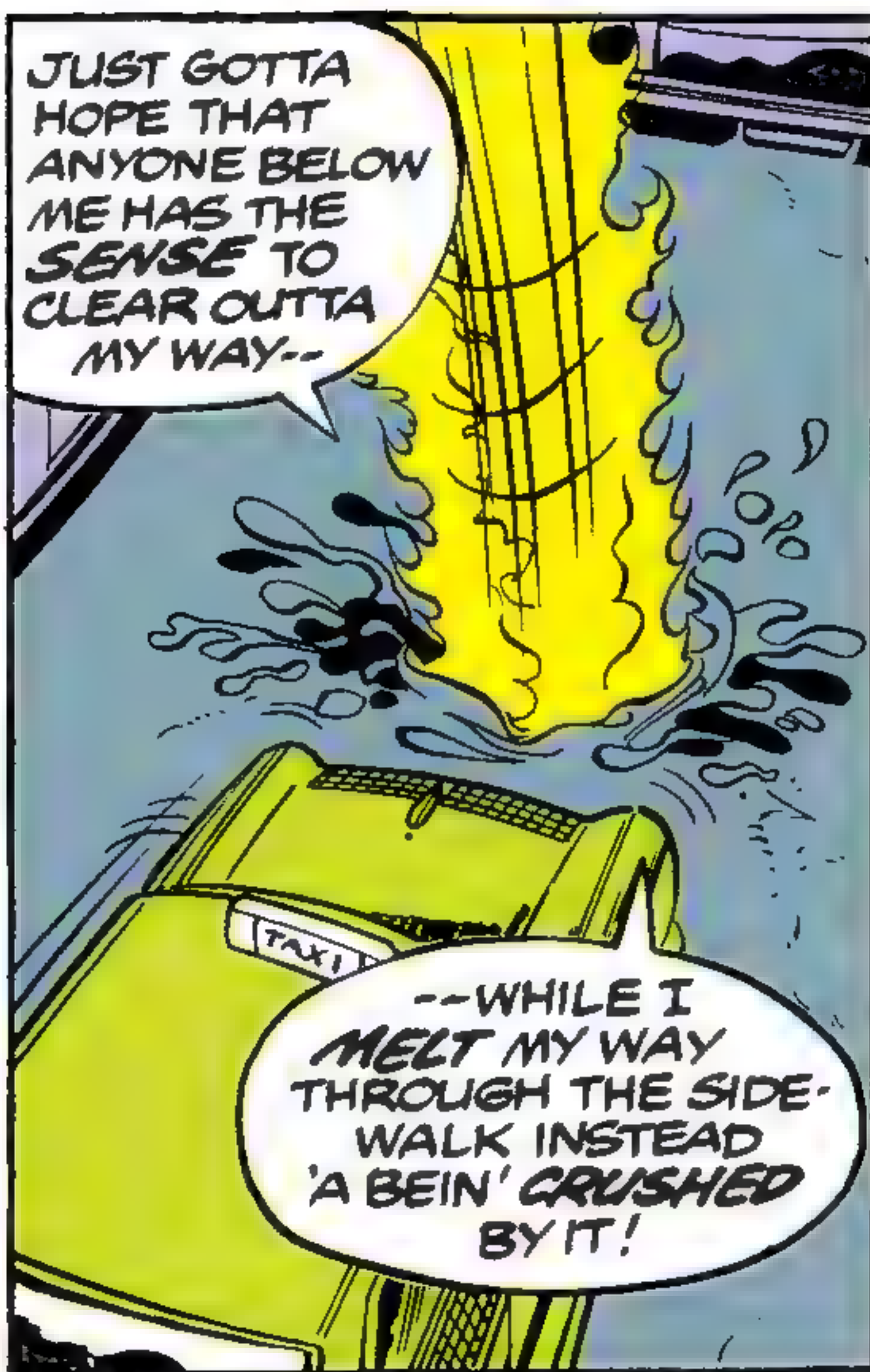
UNGGHHH! HEAD'S REELING... CAN'T SEE STRAIGHT!

KRASH!



CAN'T TAKE A HEADER AT THIS POINT-- GOTTA CLEAR AWAY THOSE BLASTED COBWEBS IN MY HEAD!

NOO!! EVERYTHING'S STILL **BLACK!** I'M STILL FALLING... CAN'T RIGHT MYSELF IN TIME!



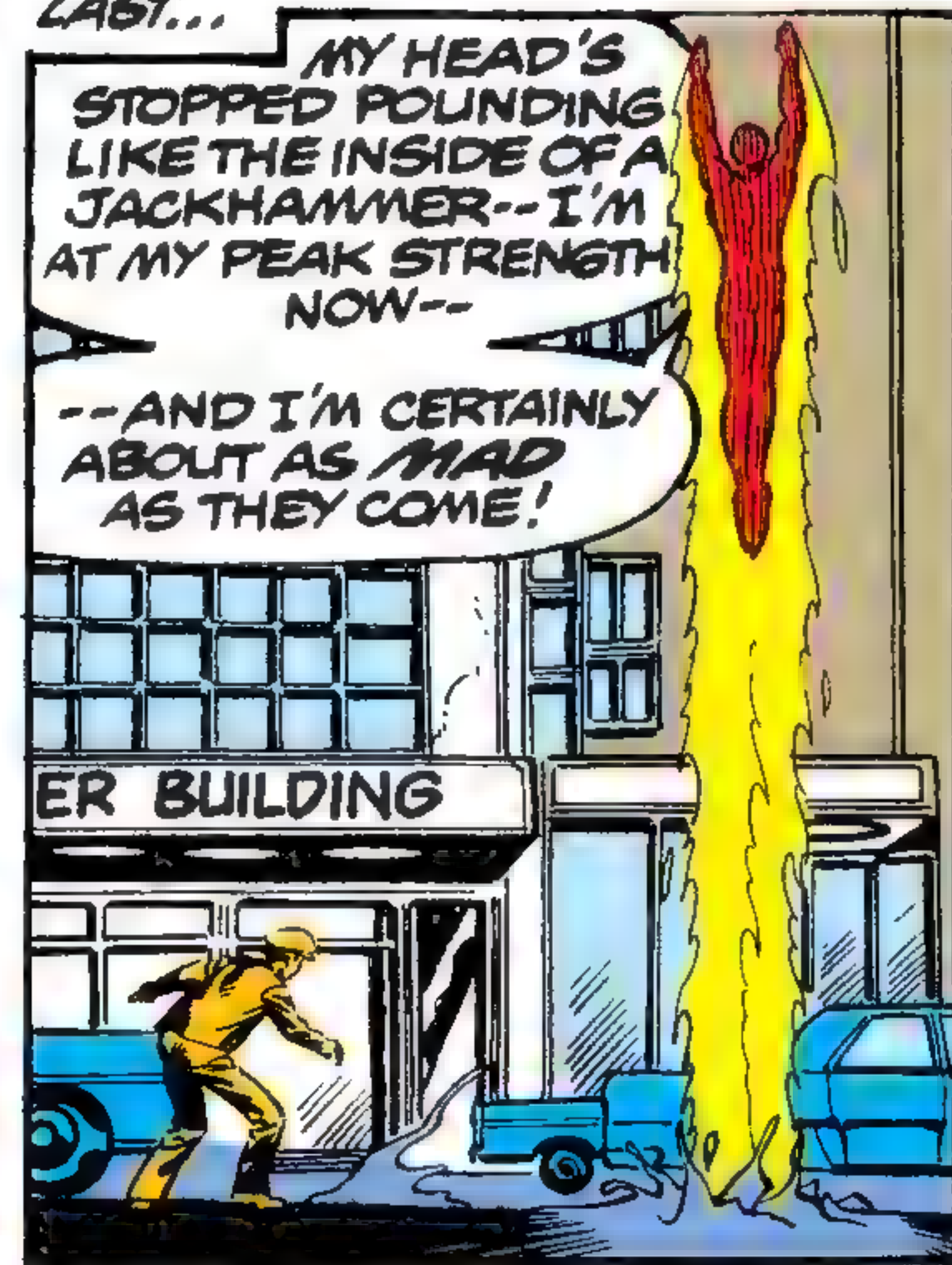
JUST GOTTA HOPE THAT ANYONE BELOW ME HAS THE **SENSE** TO CLEAR OUTTA MY WAY--

--WHILE I MELT MY WAY THROUGH THE SIDEWALK INSTEAD 'A BEIN' CRUSHED BY IT!

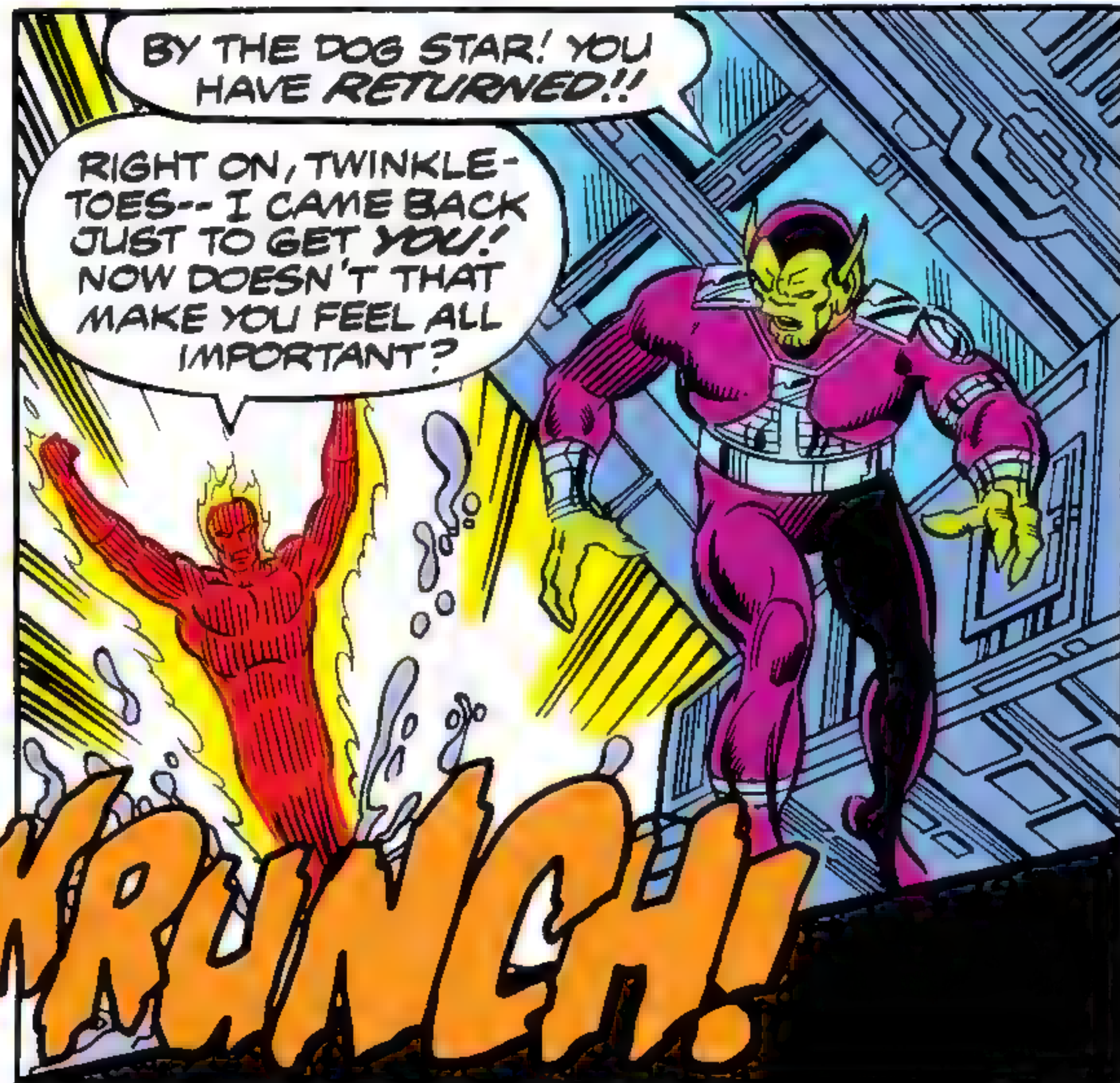
FOR LONG, AGONIZING MOMENTS, THERE IS SILENCE. BUT THEN, AT LAST...

MY HEAD'S STOPPED POUNDING LIKE THE INSIDE OF A JACKHAMMER-- I'M AT MY PEAK STRENGTH NOW--

--AND I'M CERTAINLY ABOUT AS **MAD** AS THEY COME!



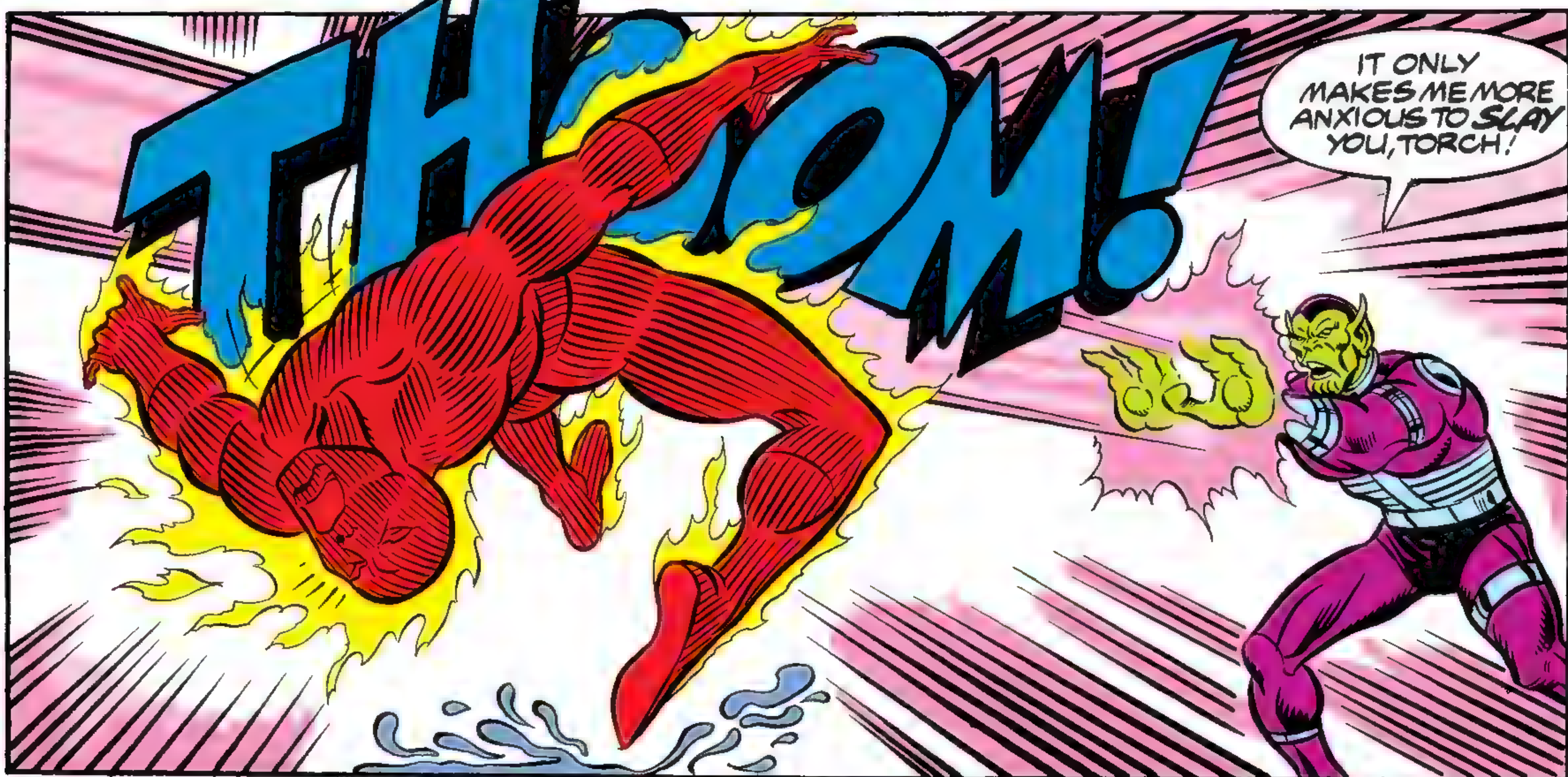
SO THERE'S NOTHING THIS SIDE 'A THE RETURN OF GALACTUS HIMSELF THAT CAN STOP ME FROM MAKING **MINCEMEAT** OUT OF THAT SKRULL SLIME!



BY THE DOG STAR! YOU HAVE **RETURNED!!**

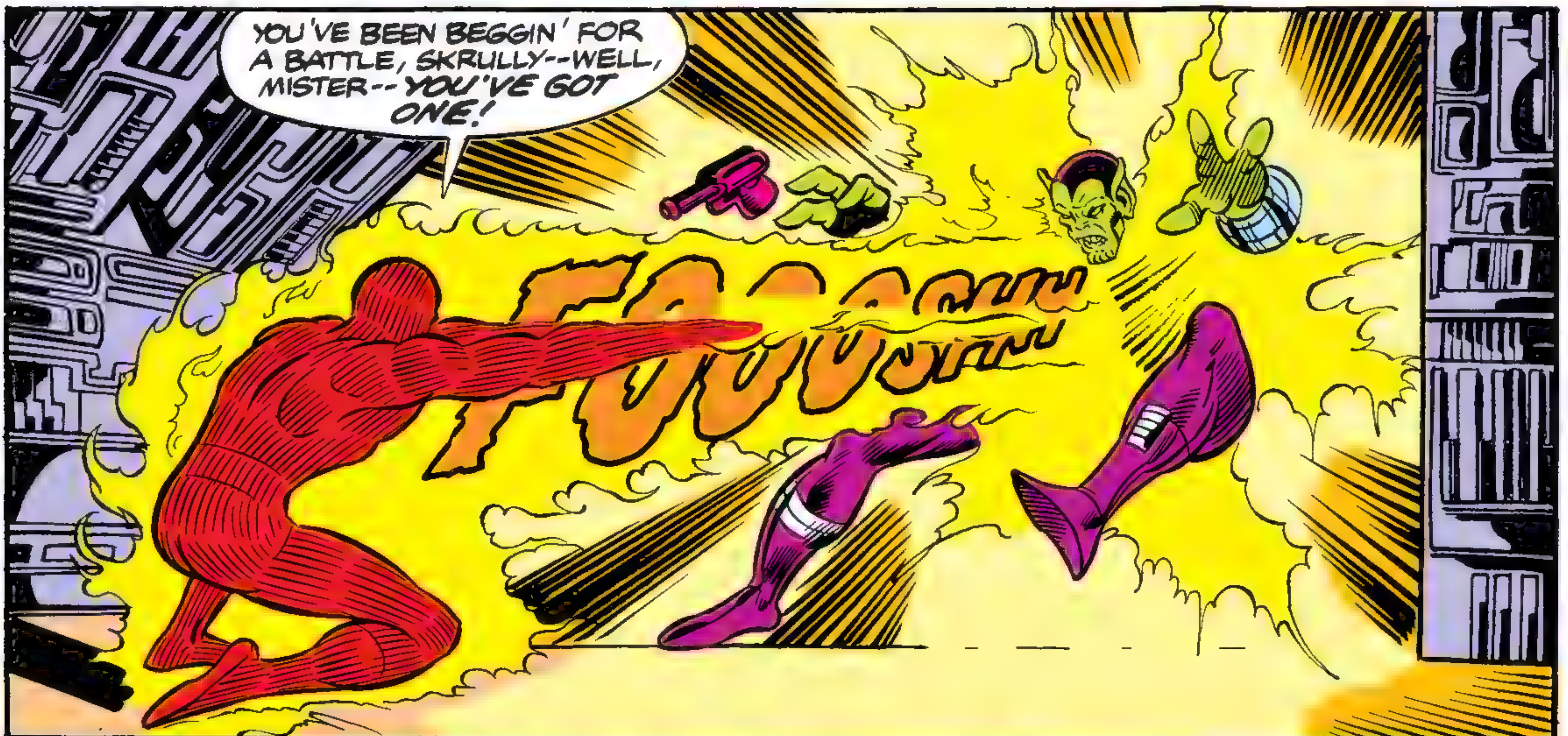
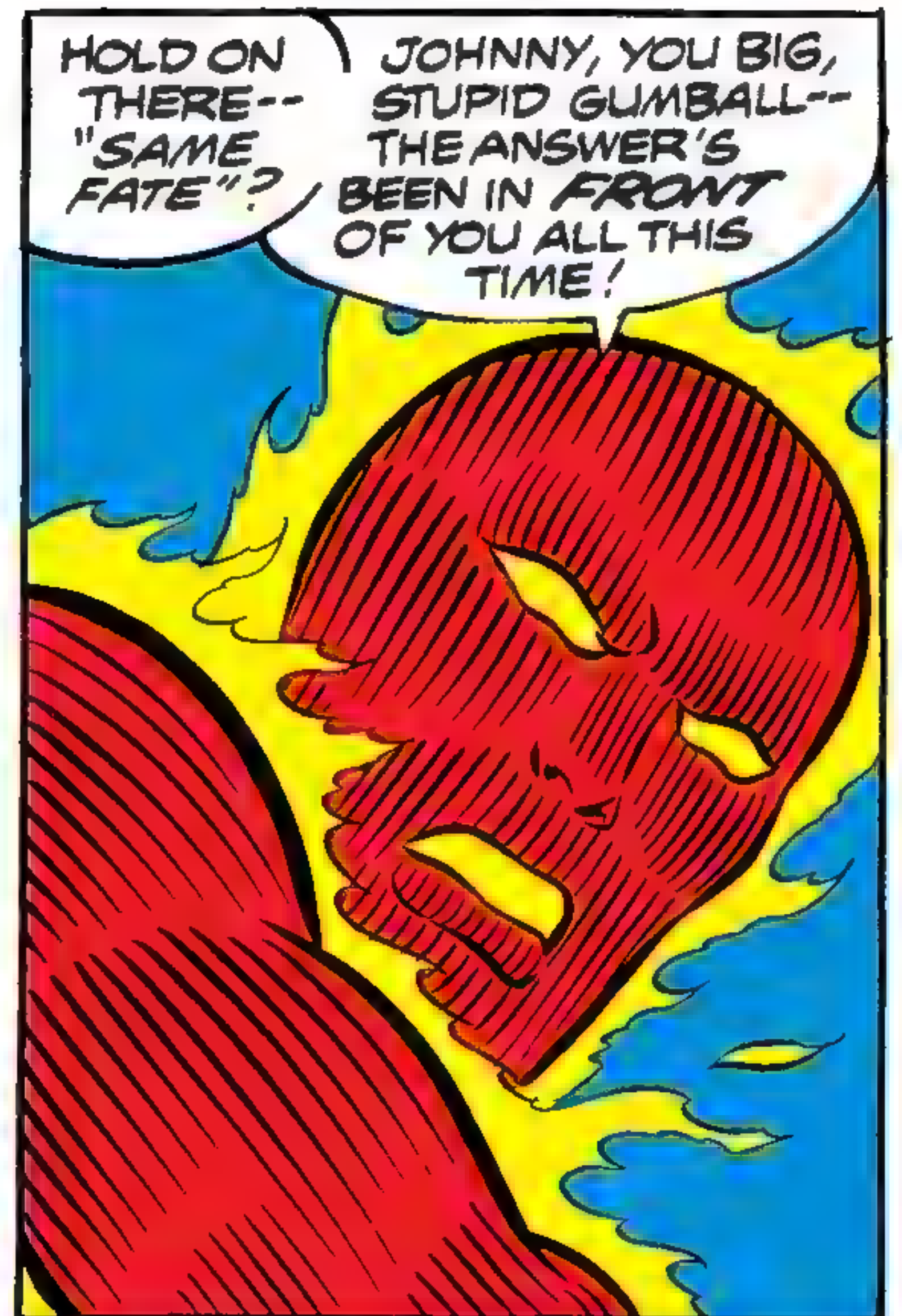
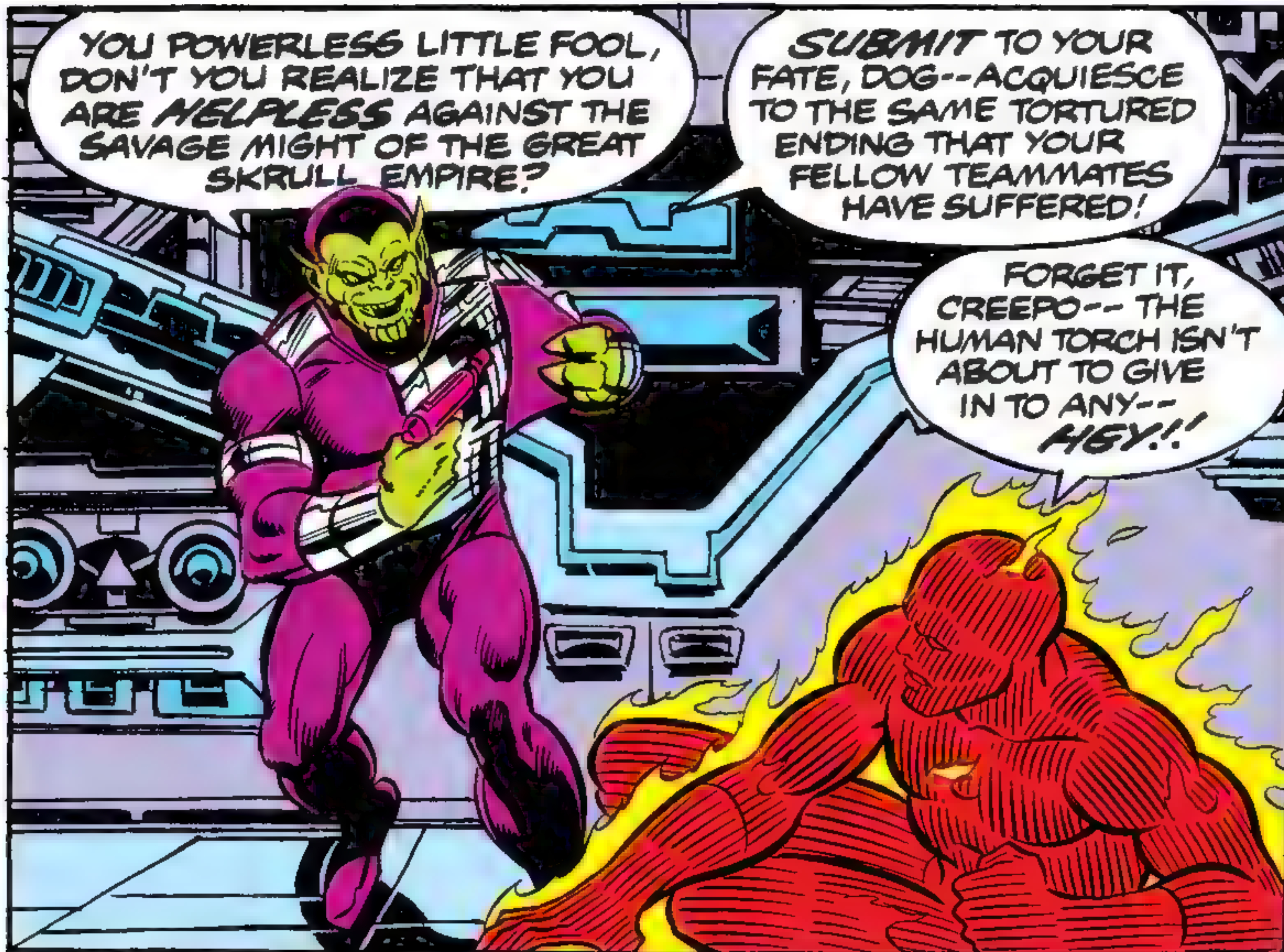
RIGHT ON, TWINKLE-TOES-- I CAME BACK JUST TO GET **YOU!** NOW DOESN'T THAT MAKE YOU FEEL ALL IMPORTANT?

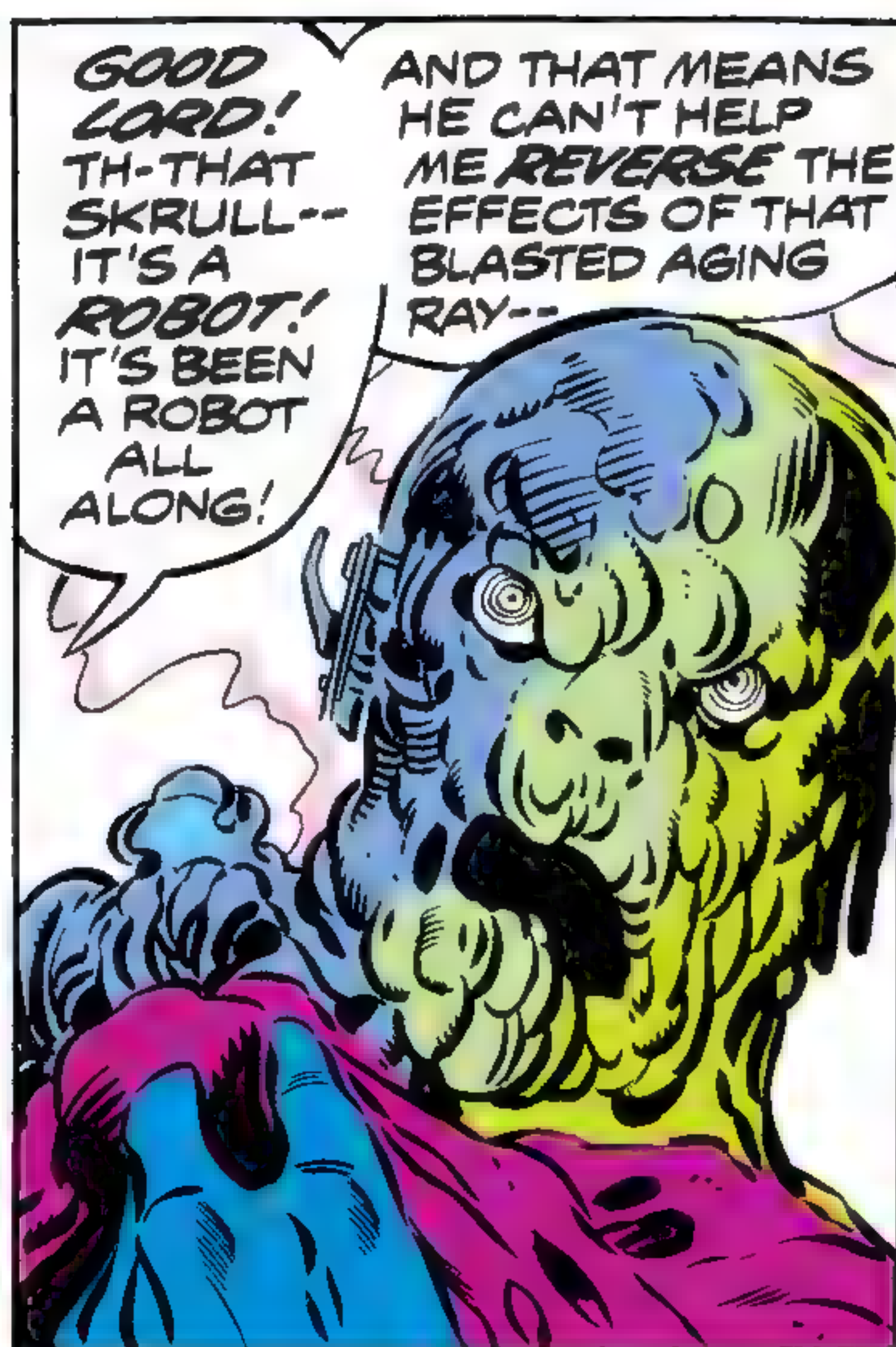
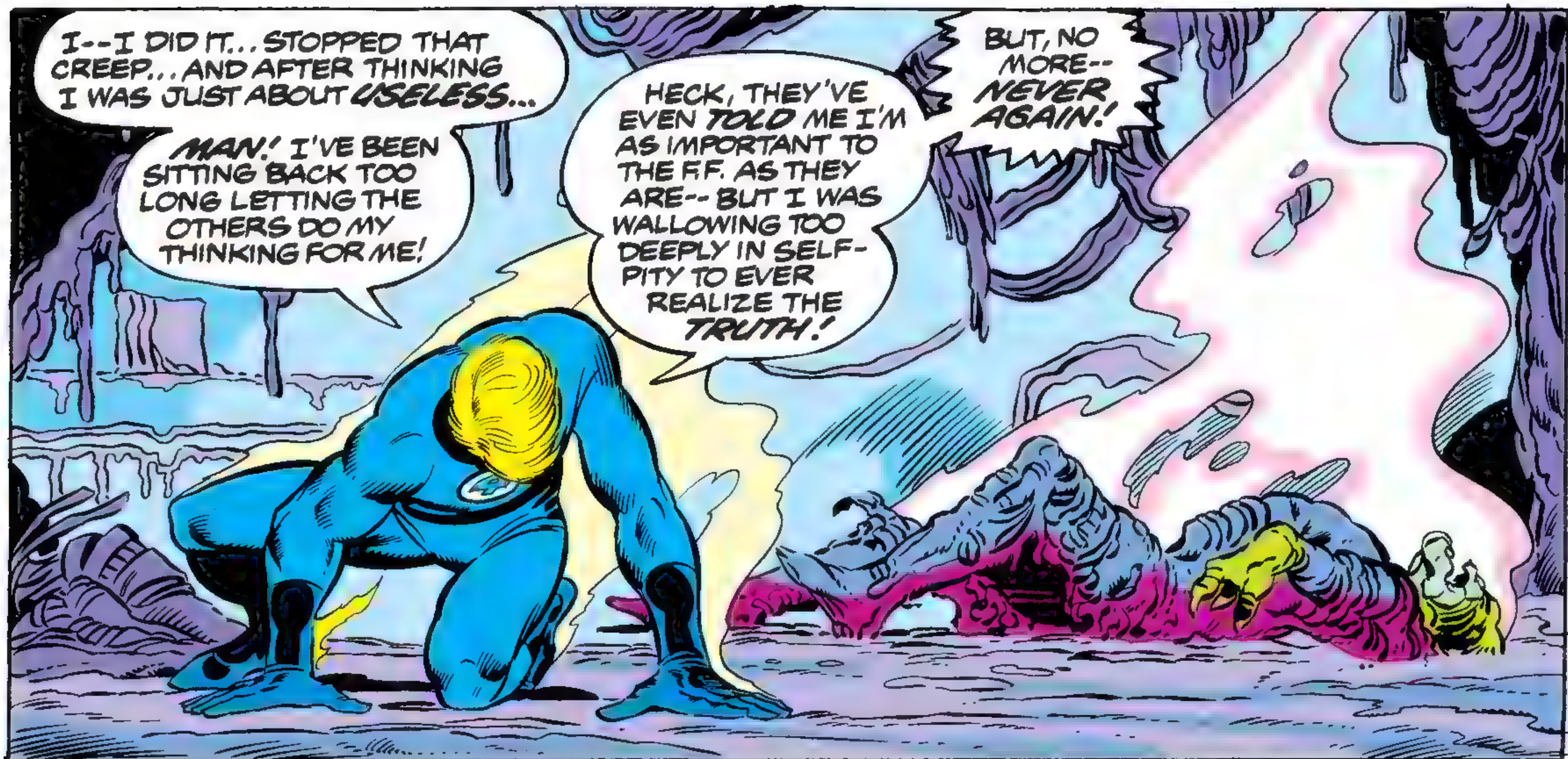
KRUNCH!



IT ONLY MAKES ME MORE ANXIOUS TO **SLAY** YOU, TORCH!

THWON!

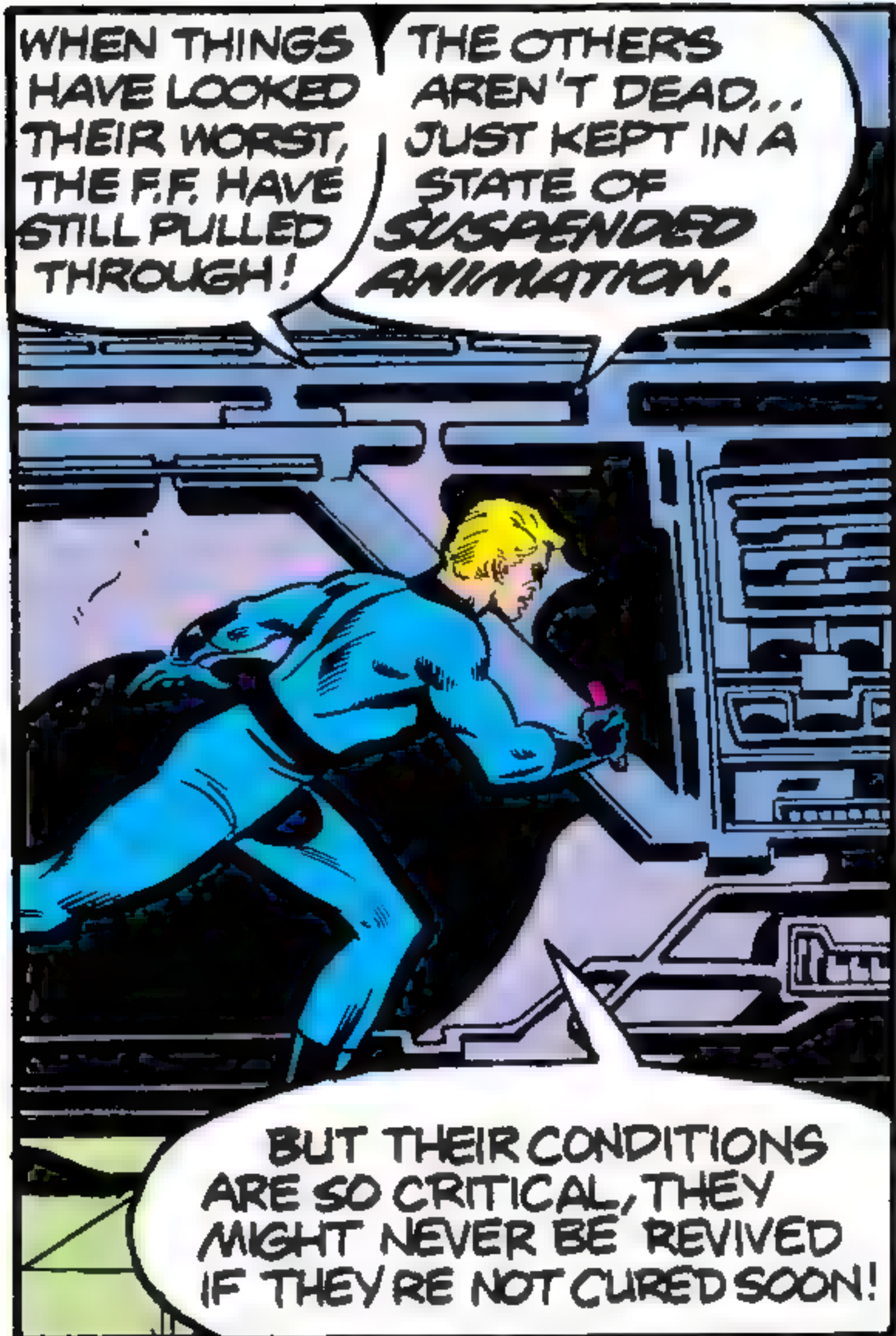




WHEN THINGS HAVE LOOKED THEIR WORST, THE F.F. HAVE STILL PULLED THROUGH!

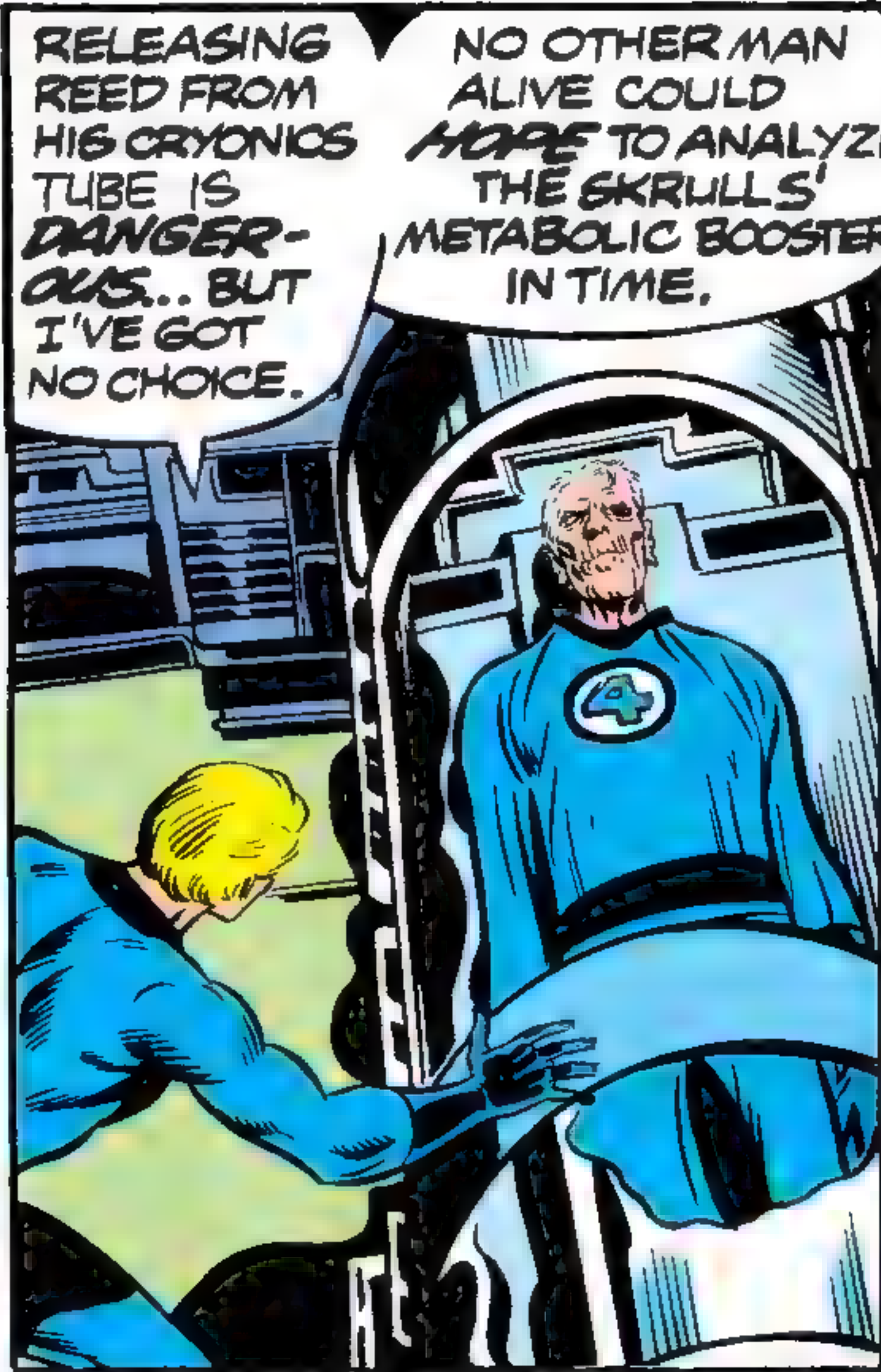
THE OTHERS AREN'T DEAD... JUST KEPT IN A STATE OF *SUSPENDED ANIMATION*.

BUT THEIR CONDITIONS ARE SO CRITICAL, THEY MIGHT NEVER BE REVIVED IF THEY'RE NOT CURED SOON!



RELEASING REED FROM HIS CRYONICS TUBE IS *DANGEROUS*... BUT I'VE GOT NO CHOICE.

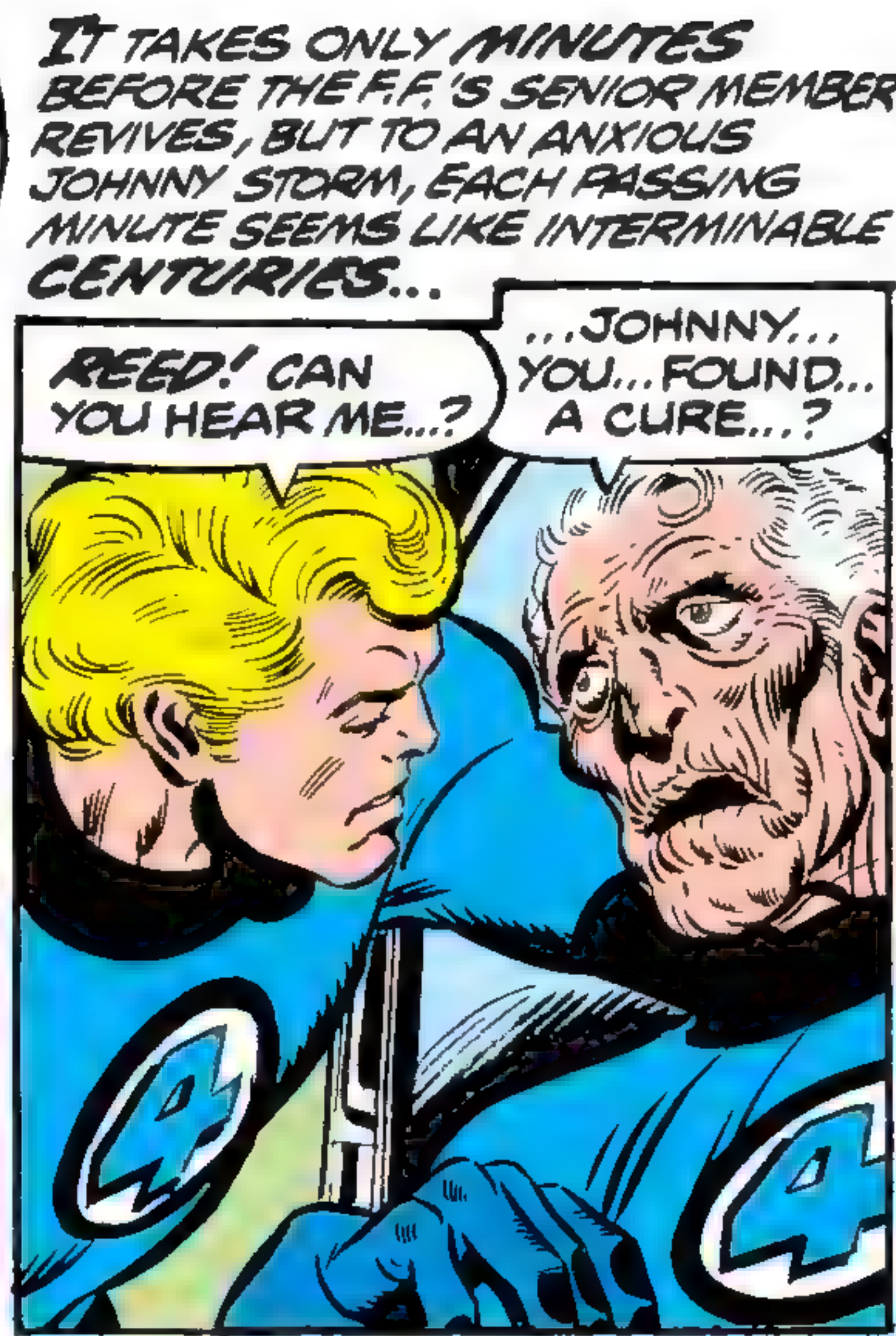
NO OTHER MAN ALIVE COULD ~~HOPE~~ TO ANALYZE THE SKRULLS' METABOLIC BOOSTER IN TIME.



IT TAKES ONLY *MINUTES* BEFORE THE F.F.'S SENIOR MEMBER REVIVES, BUT TO AN ANXIOUS JOHNNY STORM, EACH PASSING MINUTE SEEMS LIKE INTERMINABLE CENTURIES...

REED! CAN YOU HEAR ME...?

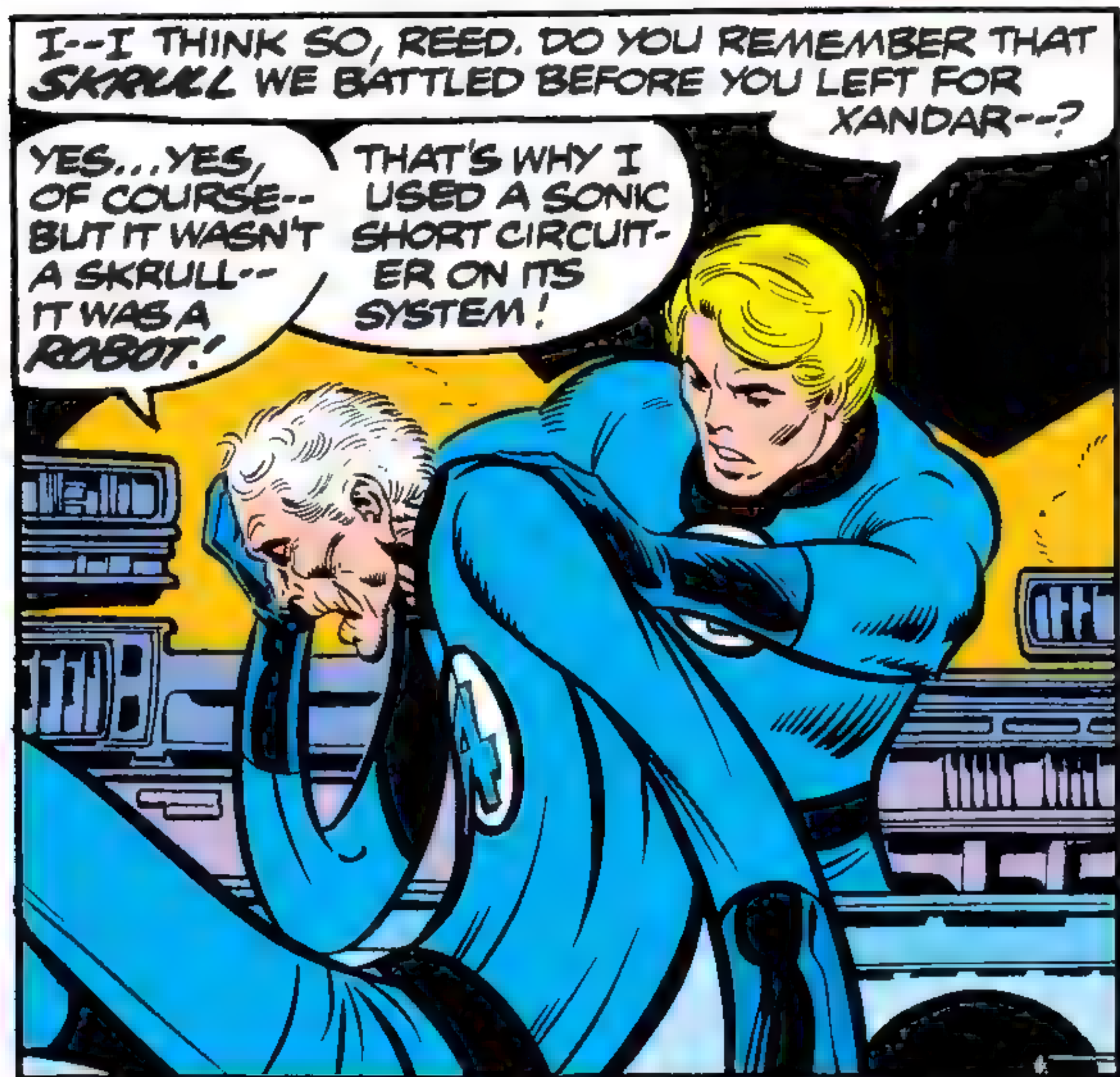
...JOHNNY... YOU... FOUND... A CURE...?



I--I THINK SO, REED. DO YOU REMEMBER THAT *SKRULL* WE BATTLED BEFORE YOU LEFT FOR XANDAR--?

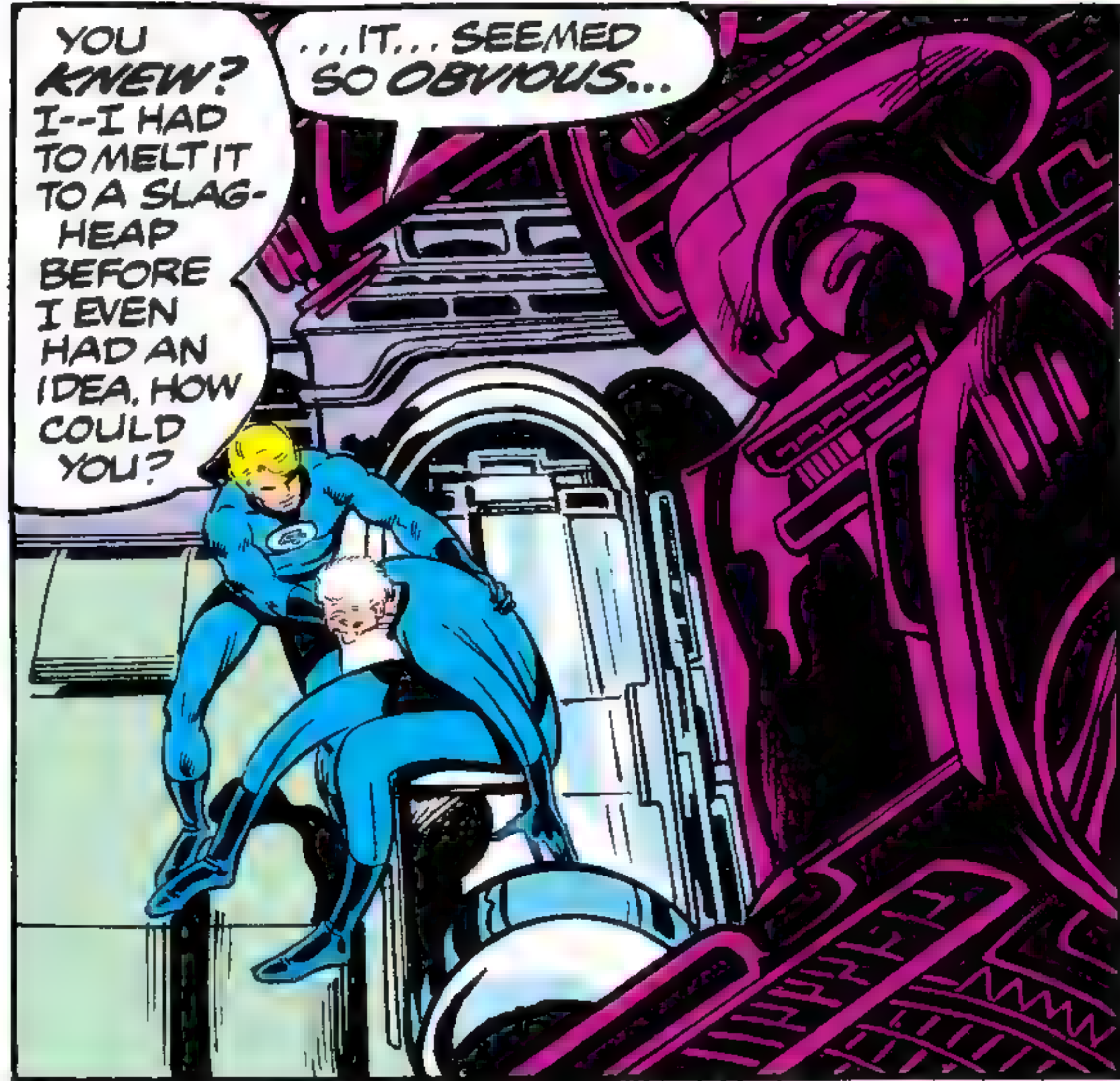
YES... YES, OF COURSE-- BUT IT WASN'T A SKRULL-- IT WAS A *ROBOT*!

THAT'S WHY I USED A SONIC SHORT CIRCUITER ON ITS SYSTEM!



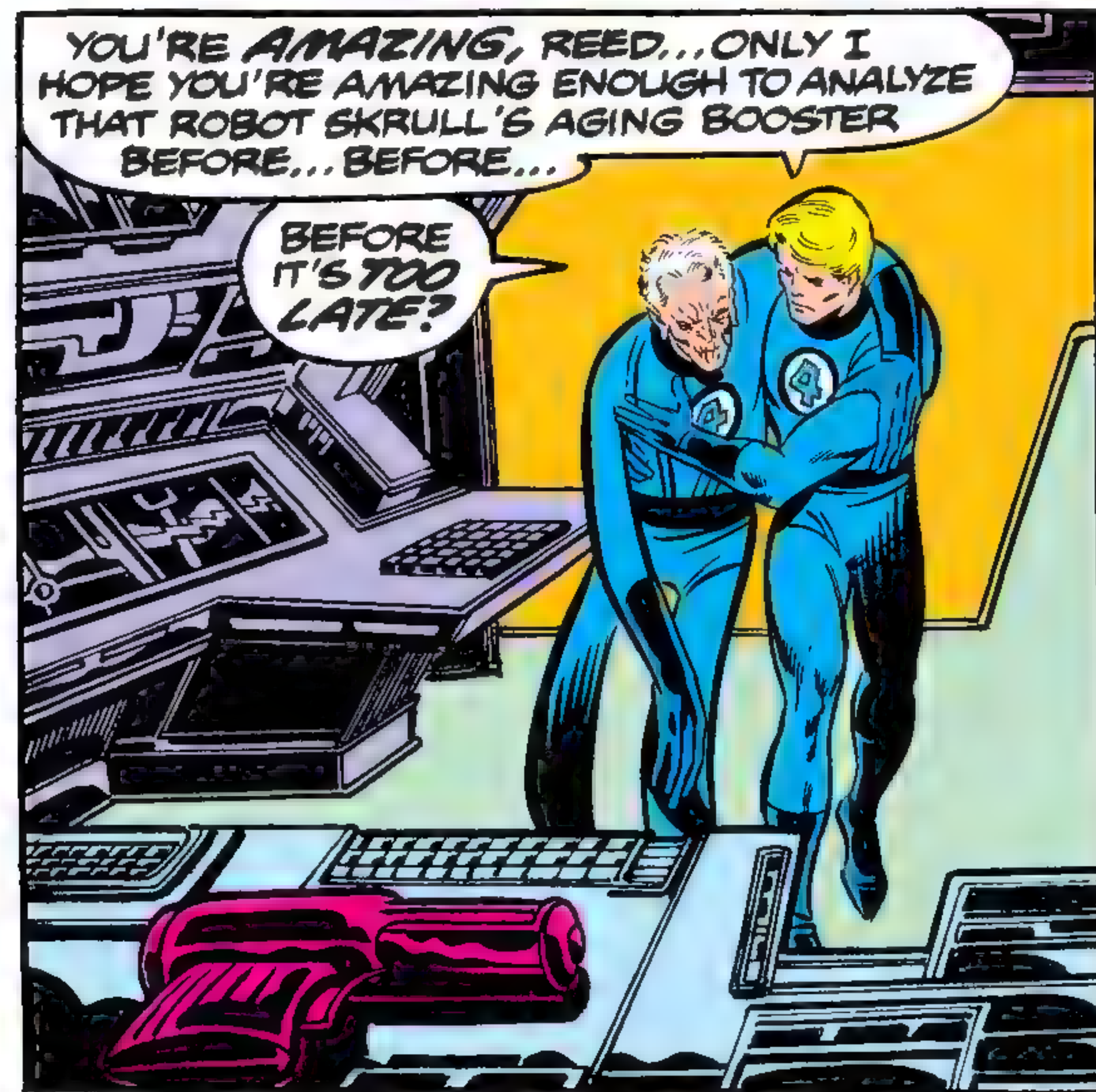
YOU *KNEW*? I--I HAD TO MELT IT TO A SLAG-HEAP BEFORE I EVEN HAD AN IDEA, HOW COULD YOU?

...IT... SEEMED SO OBVIOUS...

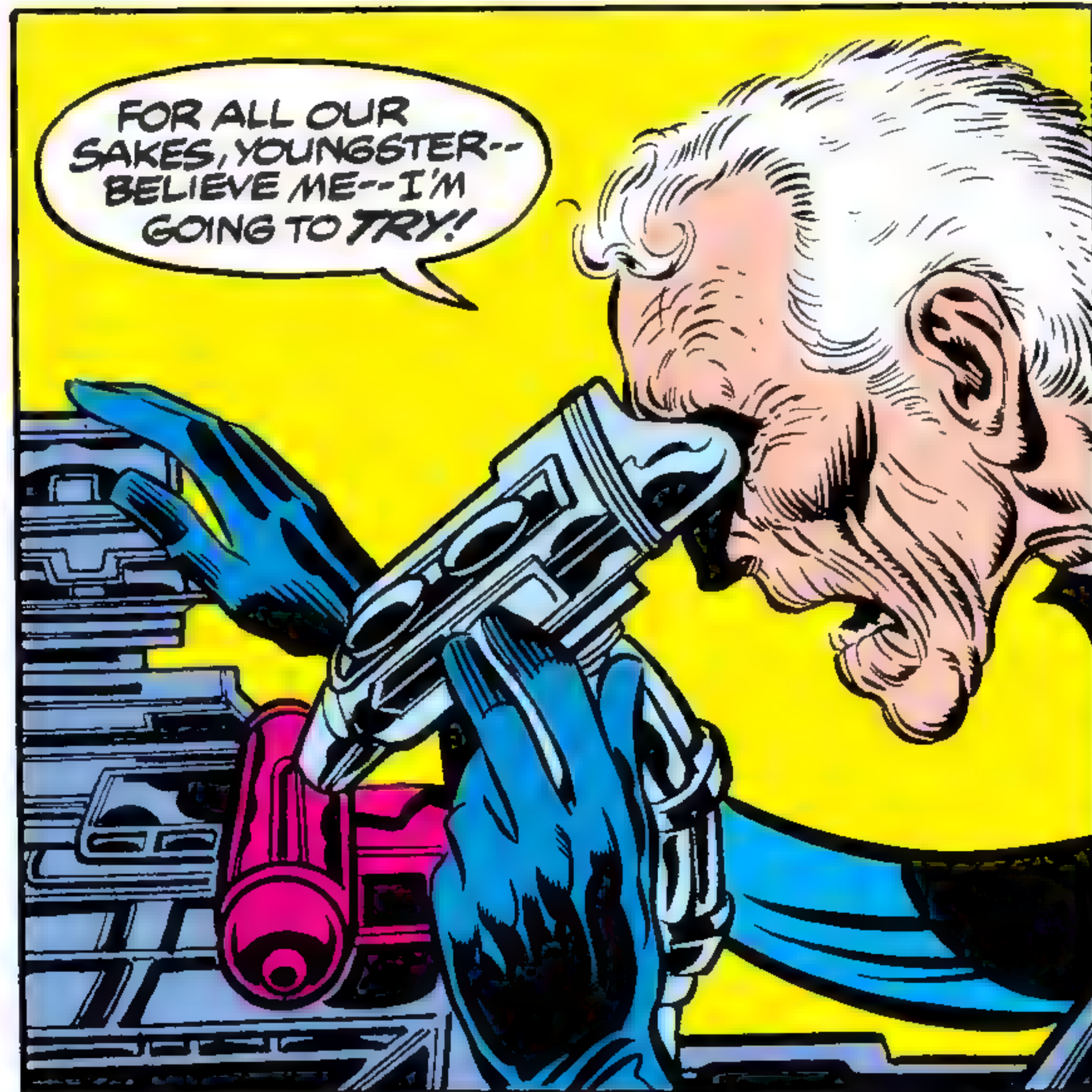


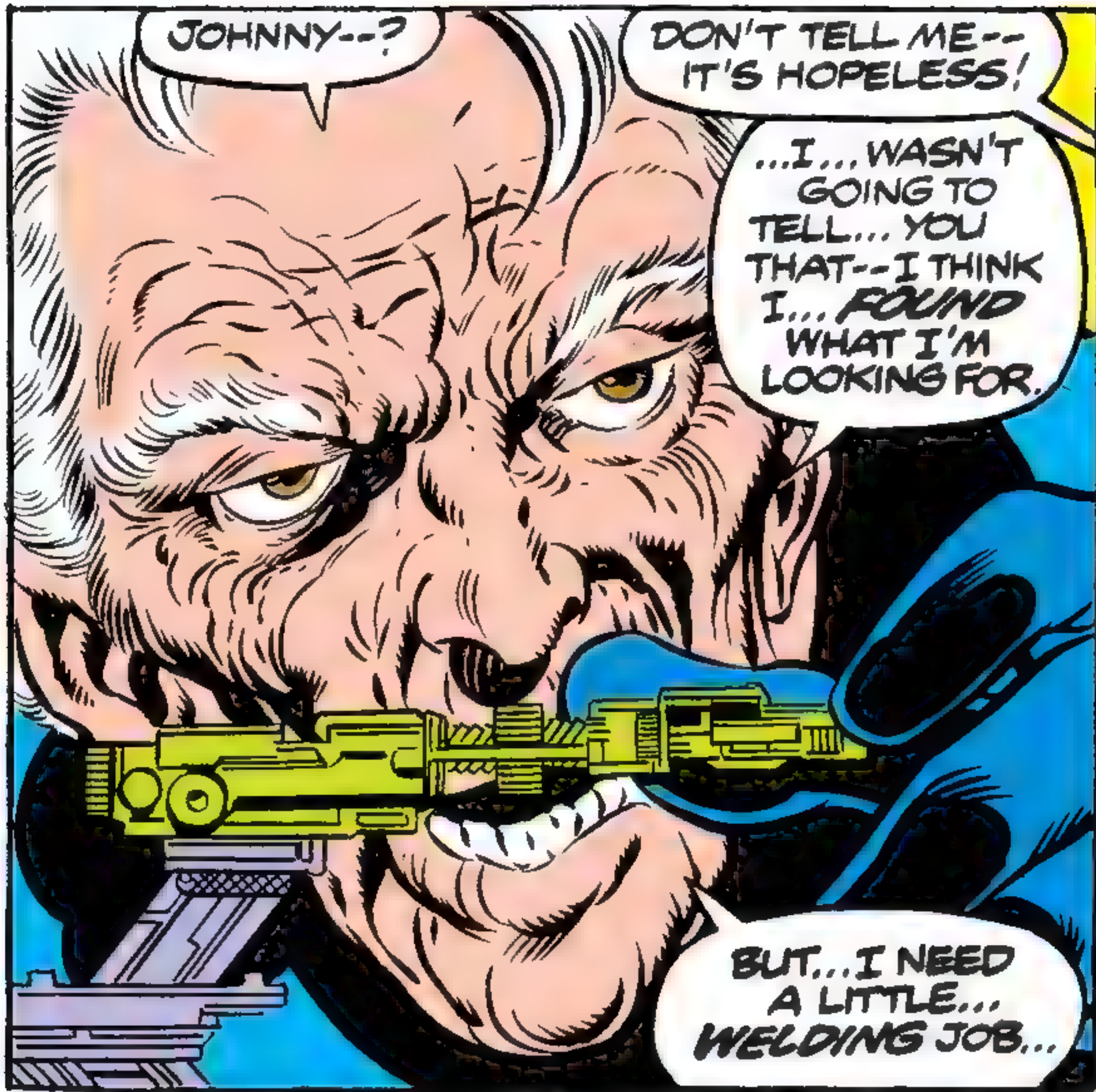
YOU'RE *AMAZING*, REED... ONLY I HOPE YOU'RE AMAZING ENOUGH TO ANALYZE THAT ROBOT SKRULL'S AGING BOOSTER BEFORE... BEFORE...

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE?



FOR ALL OUR SALES, YOUNGSTER-- BELIEVE ME-- I'M GOING TO *TRY*!





JOHNNY--?

DON'T TELL ME--
IT'S HOPELESS!

...I... WASN'T
GOING TO
TELL... YOU
THAT-- I THINK
I... **FOUND**
WHAT I'M
LOOKING FOR.

BUT... I NEED
A LITTLE...
WELDING JOB...

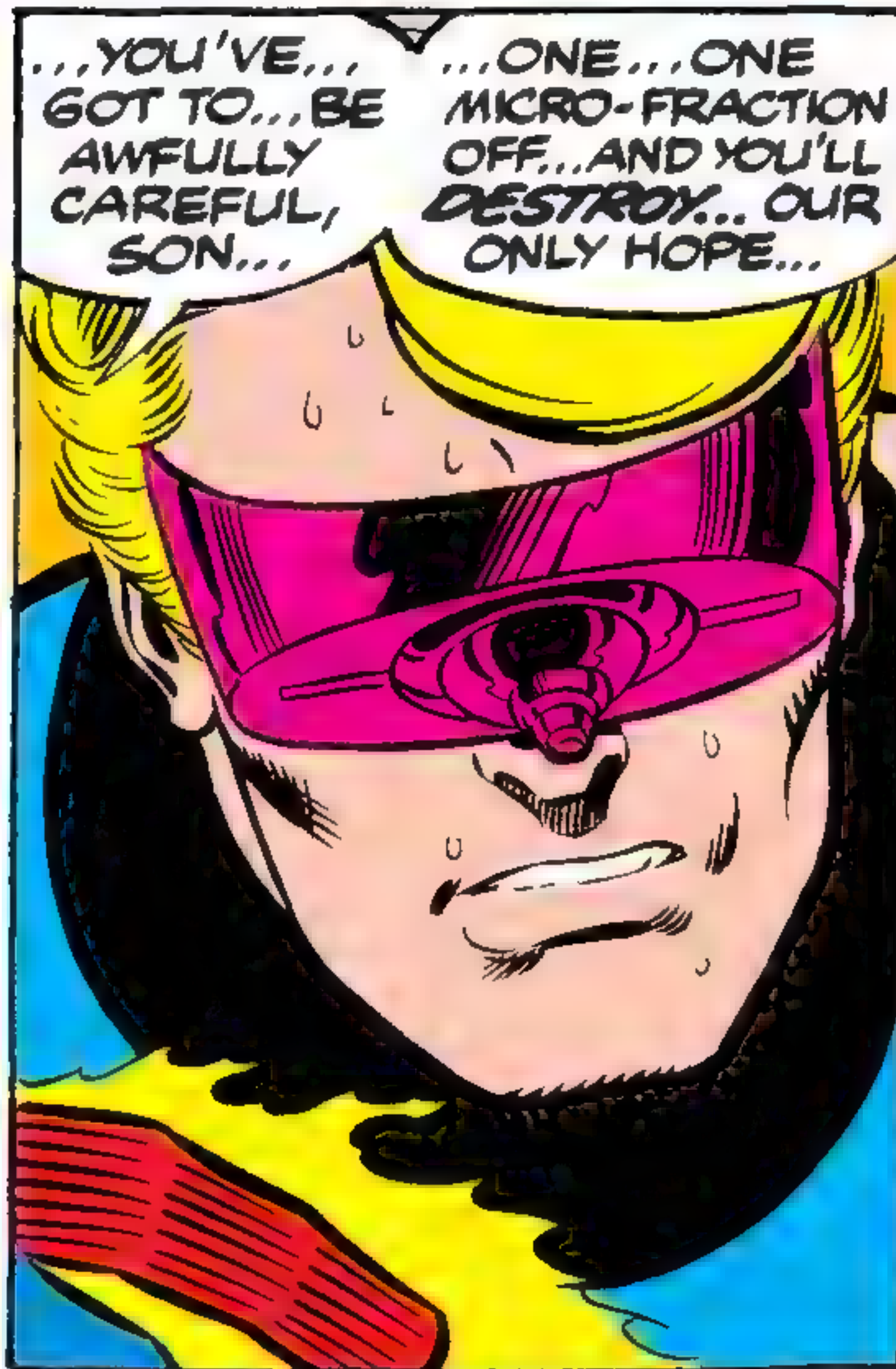


YOU GOT IT, REED. WHAT
DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?

GOOD! YOU'RE
WEARING THE
MICRO-
ANALYZER--



...THE SKRULLS... HAVE
REDUCED ALL... ALL THEIR
COMPONENTS TO PARTS...
SMALLER THAN **COMPUTER**
CHIPS...



...YOU'VE...
GOT TO... BE
AWFULLY
CAREFUL,
SON...

...ONE... ONE
MICRO-FRACTION
OFF... AND YOU'LL
DESTROY... OUR
ONLY HOPE...



DO... DO
YOU THINK
YOU CAN
DO IT...?

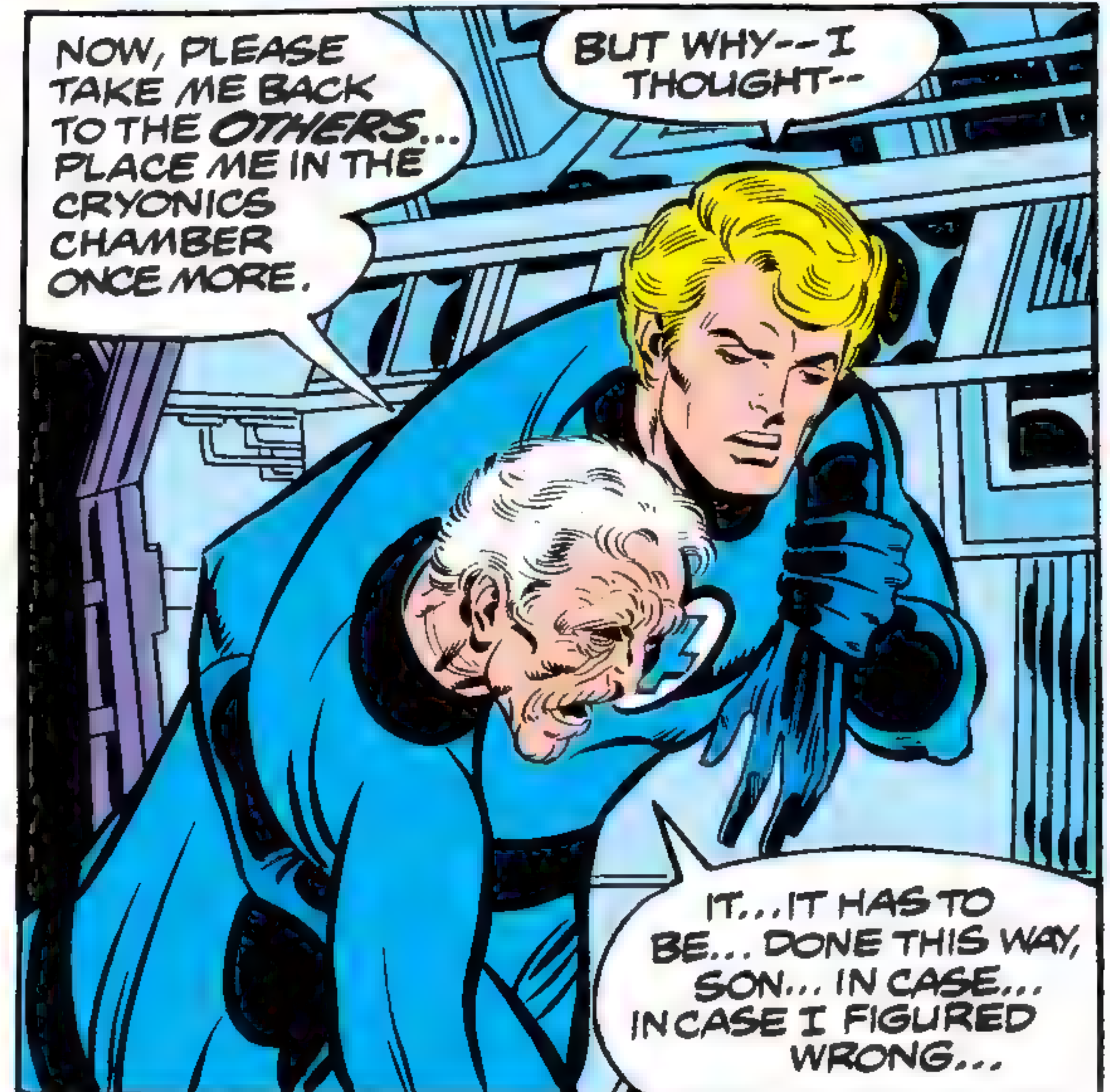
I DON'T HAVE TO
THINK ABOUT IT,
REED. I **WILL** DO
IT. SO HELP ME,
GOD, I WILL!

FOR LONG TORTURED MOMENTS, THE TWO SIT
HUNCHED OVER THE VIRTUALLY INVISIBLE CIRCUITRY.
SWEAT FLOWS FREELY FROM JOHNNY STORM'S
FURROWED BROW. BUT THEN...



DID I DO IT?

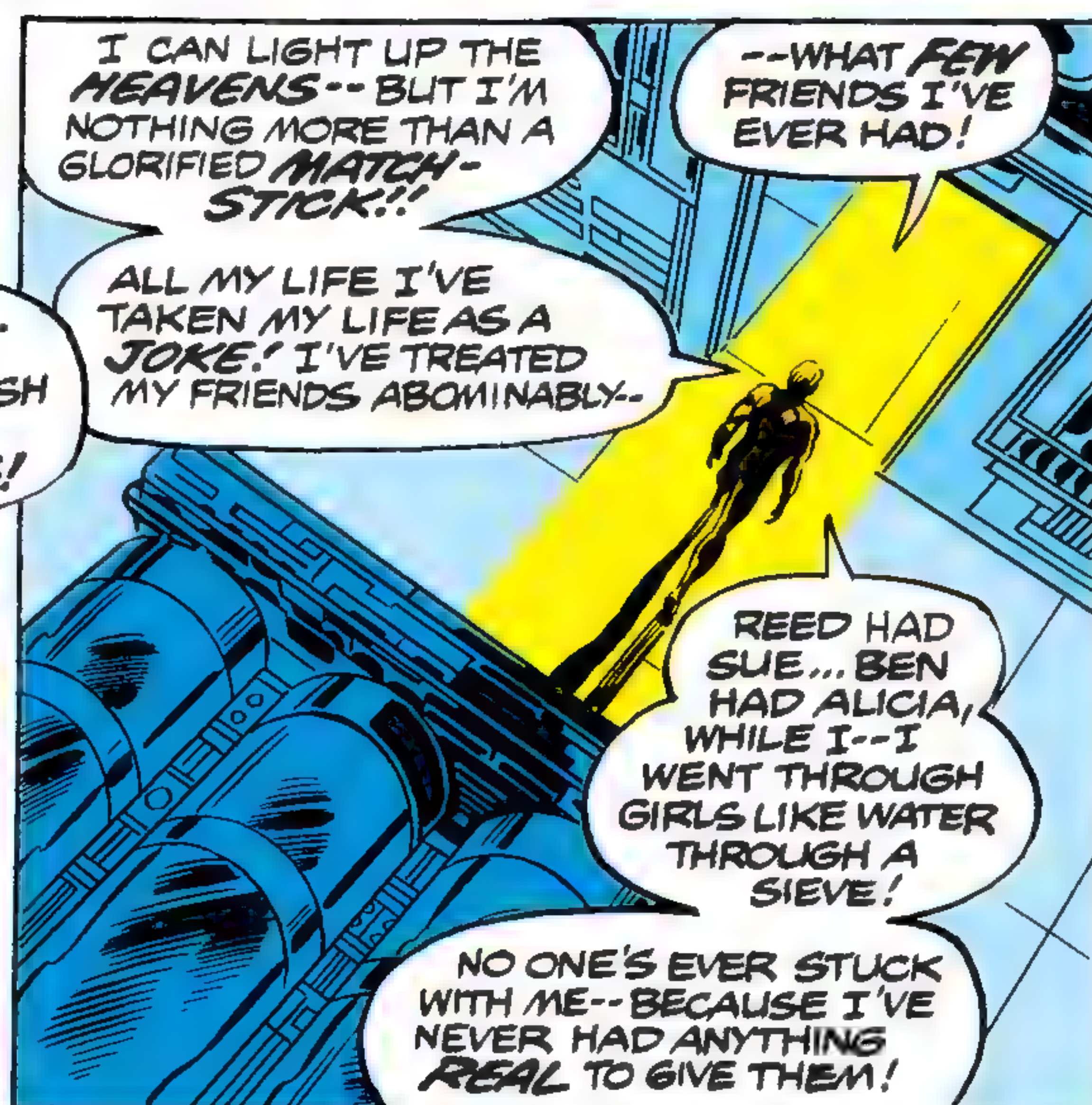
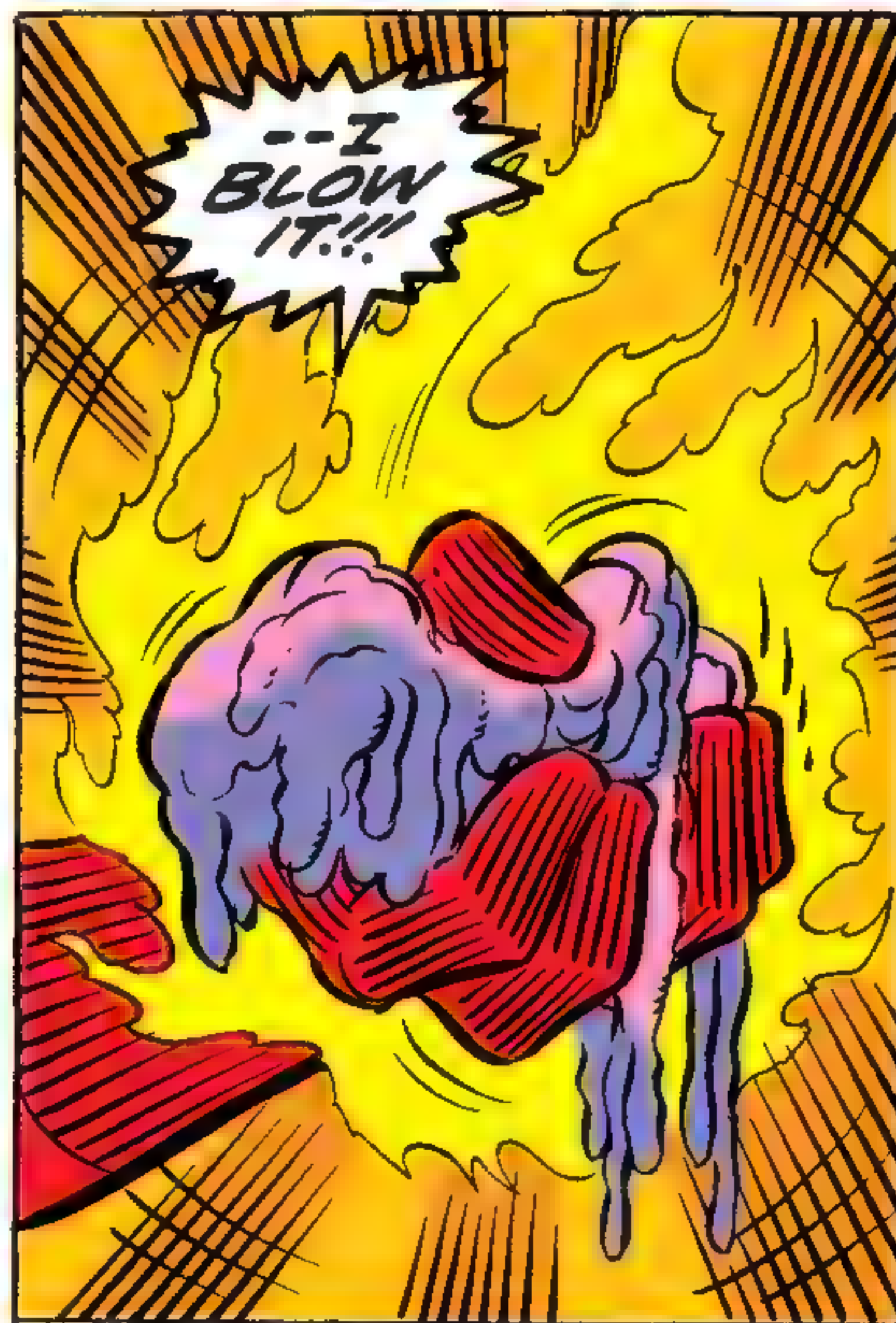
YOU DID
IT, SON...
YOU DID IT.

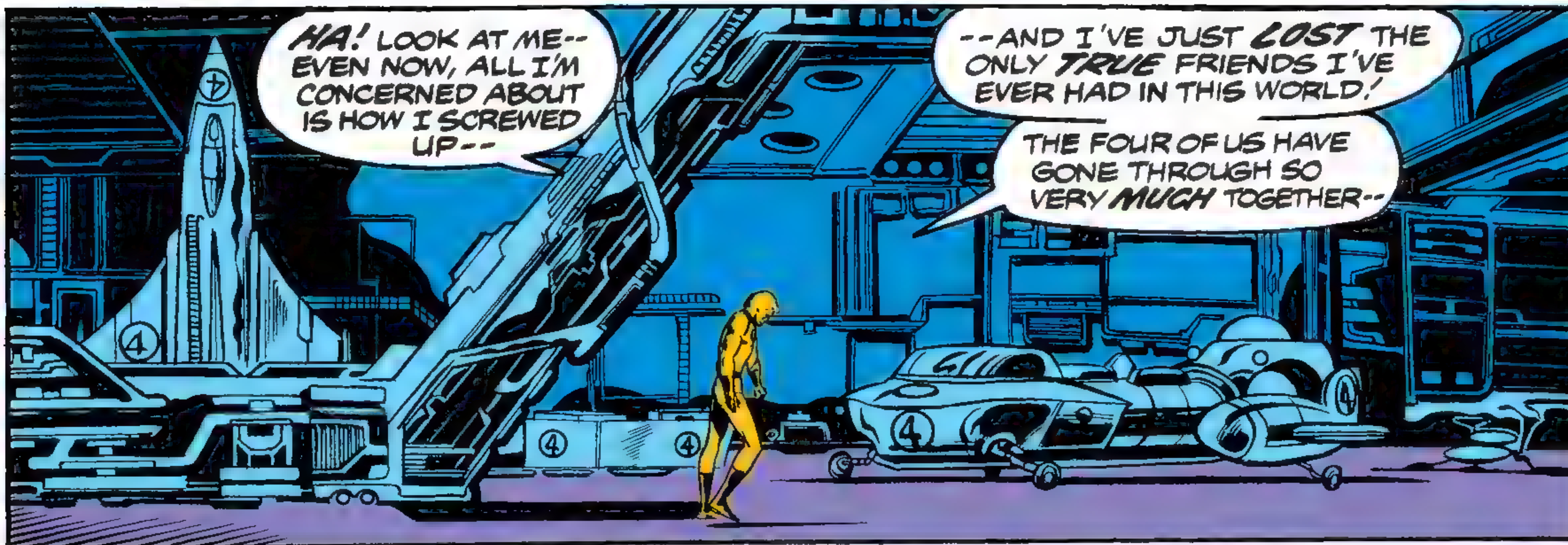


NOW, PLEASE
TAKE ME BACK
TO THE **OTHERS...**
PLACE ME IN THE
CRYONICS
CHAMBER
ONCE MORE.

BUT WHY-- I
THOUGHT--

IT... IT HAS TO
BE... DONE THIS WAY,
SON... IN CASE...
IN CASE I FIGURED
WRONG...

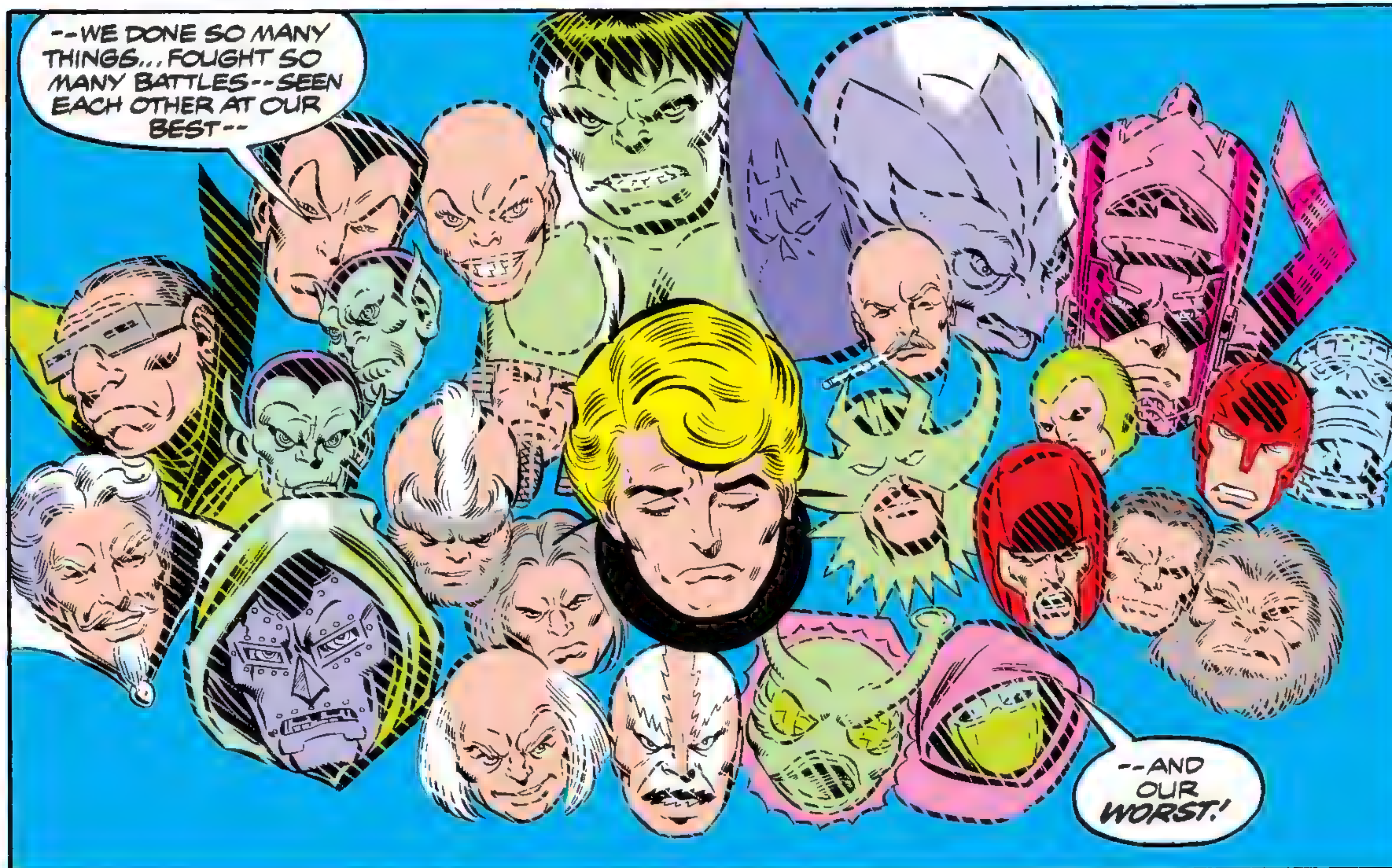




HA! LOOK AT ME--
EVEN NOW, ALL I'M
CONCERNED ABOUT
IS HOW I SCREWED
UP--

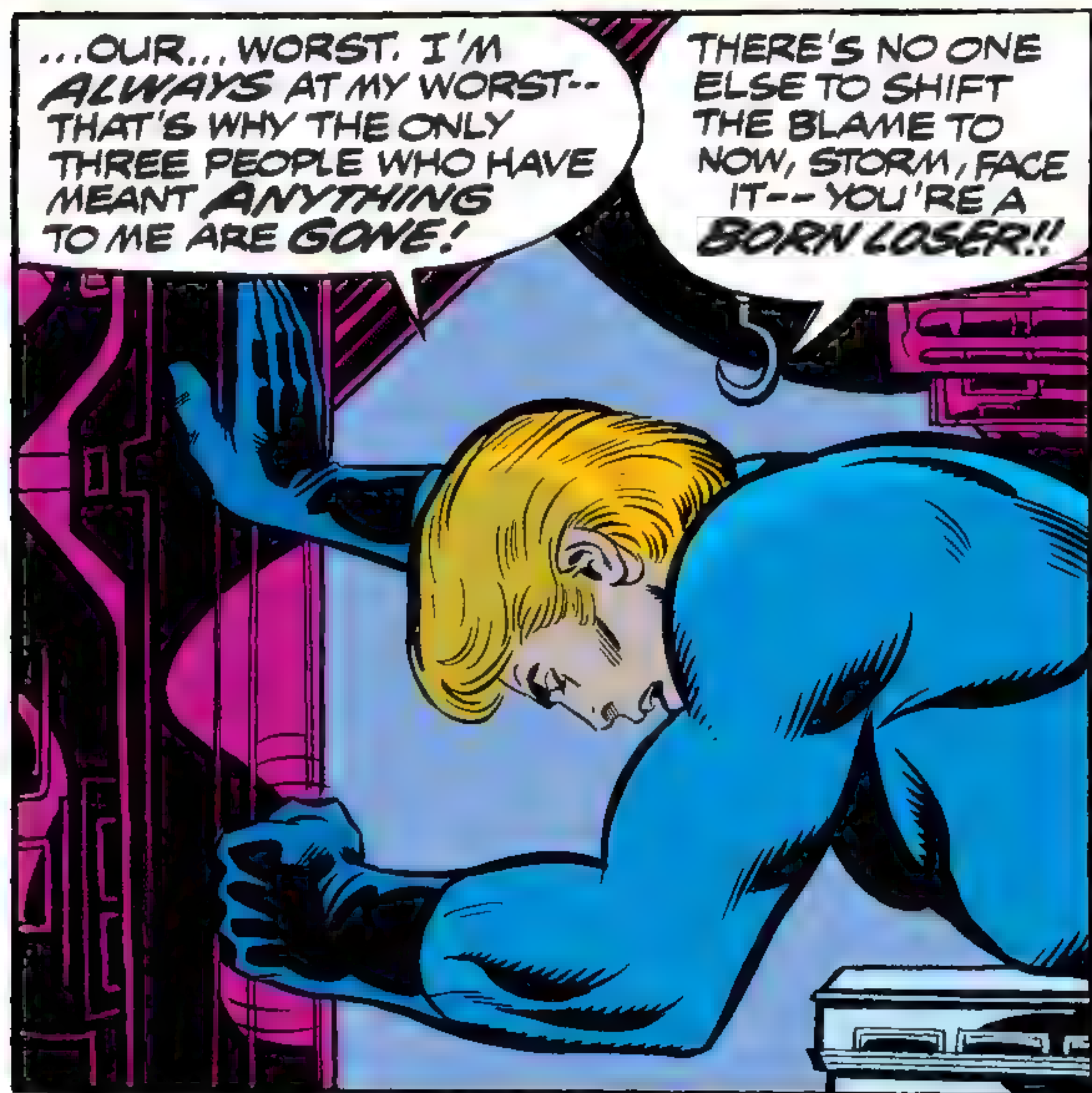
--AND I'VE JUST *LOST* THE
ONLY *TRUE* FRIENDS I'VE
EVER HAD IN THIS WORLD!

THE FOUR OF US HAVE
GONE THROUGH SO
VERY *MUCH* TOGETHER--



--WE DONE SO MANY
THINGS... FOUGHT SO
MANY BATTLES--SEEN
EACH OTHER AT OUR
BEST--

--AND
OUR
WORST!



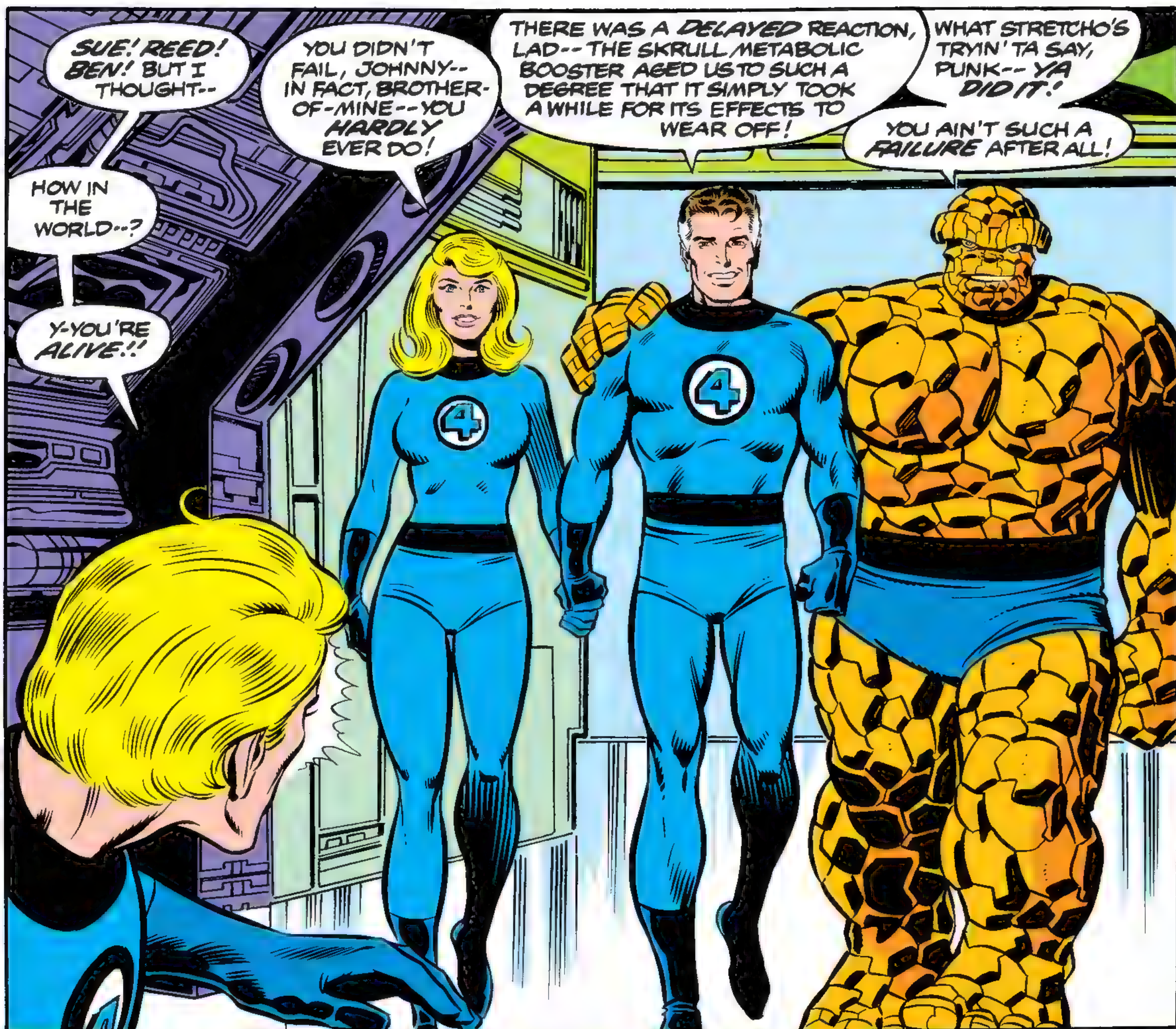
...OUR... WORST. I'M
ALWAYS AT MY WORST--
THAT'S WHY THE ONLY
THREE PEOPLE WHO HAVE
MEANT *ANYTHING*
TO ME ARE *GONE!*

THERE'S NO ONE
ELSE TO SHIFT
THE BLAME TO
NOW, STORM, FACE
IT-- YOU'RE A
BORN LOSER!!



I WOULDN'T
EXACTLY SAY
THAT, SON!

WHAT--?
WHO--?!!



SUE! REED!
BEN! BUT I
THOUGHT--

YOU DIDN'T
FAIL, JOHNNY--
IN FACT, BROTHER-
OF-MINE--YOU
HARDLY
EVER DO!

THERE WAS A *DELAYED* REACTION,
LAD-- THE SKRULL/METABOLIC
BOOSTER AGED US TO SUCH A
DEGREE THAT IT SIMPLY TOOK
A WHILE FOR ITS EFFECTS TO
WEAR OFF!

WHAT STRETCHO'S
TRYIN' TA SAY,
PUNK-- YA
DID IT!

YOU AIN'T SUCH A
FAILURE AFTER ALL!

HOW IN
THE
WORLD--?

Y-YOU'RE
ALIVE!!

YOU'VE NEVER BEEN A FAILURE, JOHNNY--
NO MATTER WHAT YOU THINK, NO MATTER
WHAT YOU MAY BELIEVE-- WITHOUT YOU,
THE FANTASTIC FOUR COULD NOT HOPE
TO EXIST!

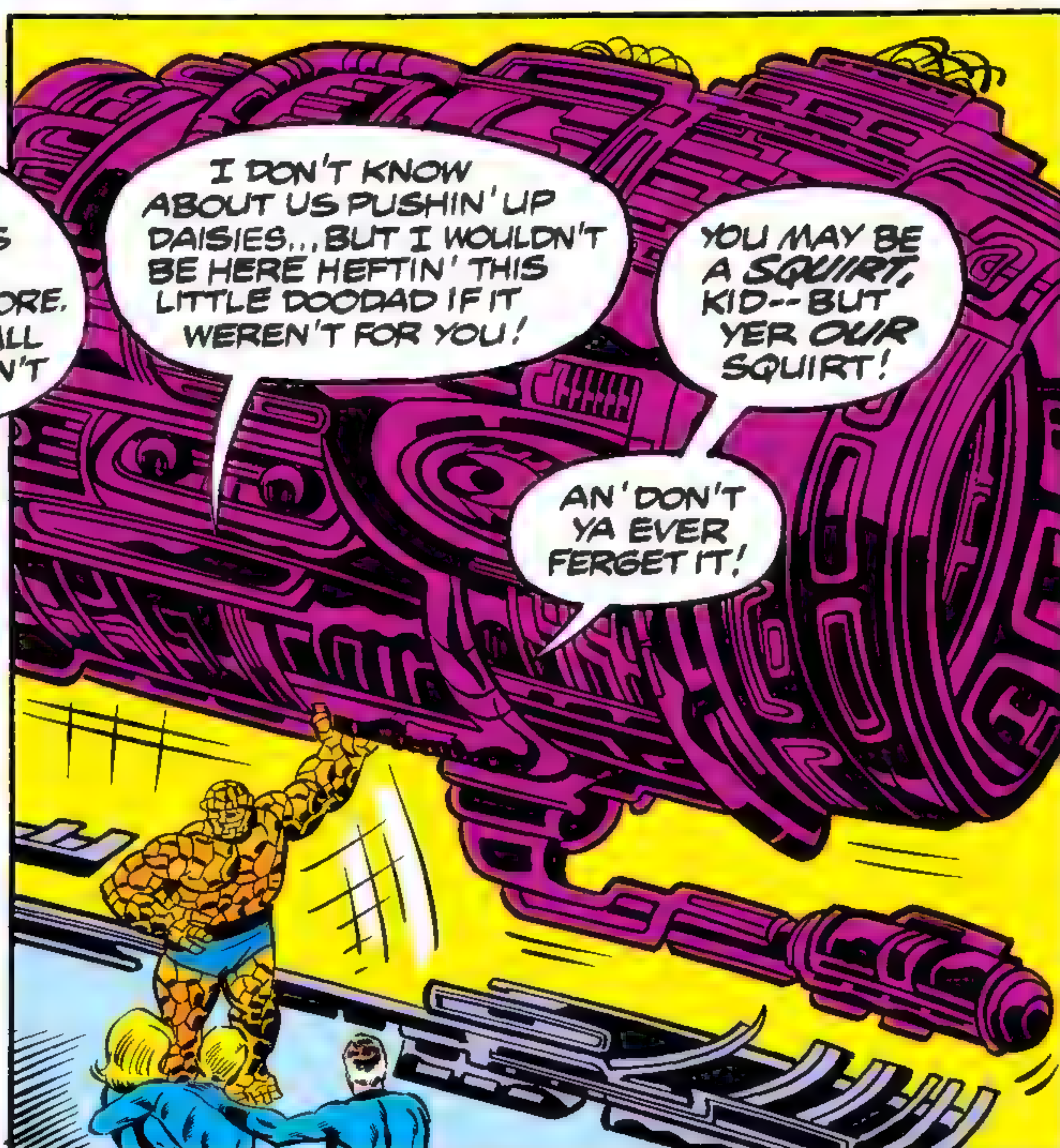
WITH YOU,
WE'RE A *TEAM*... WITHOUT
YOU-- WELL, I SHUDDER
TO THINK WHAT IT WOULD
BE LIKE WITHOUT YOU!

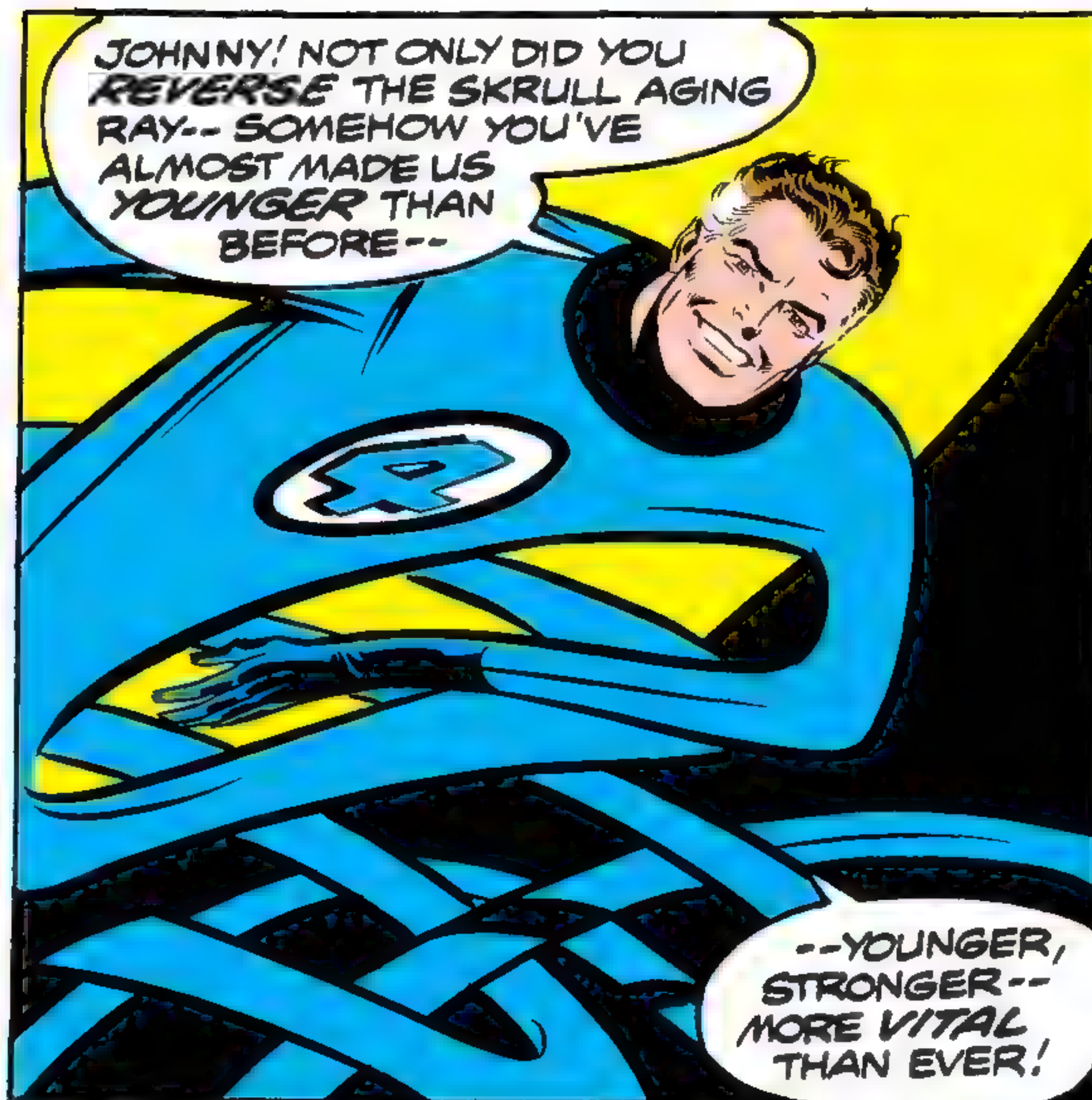
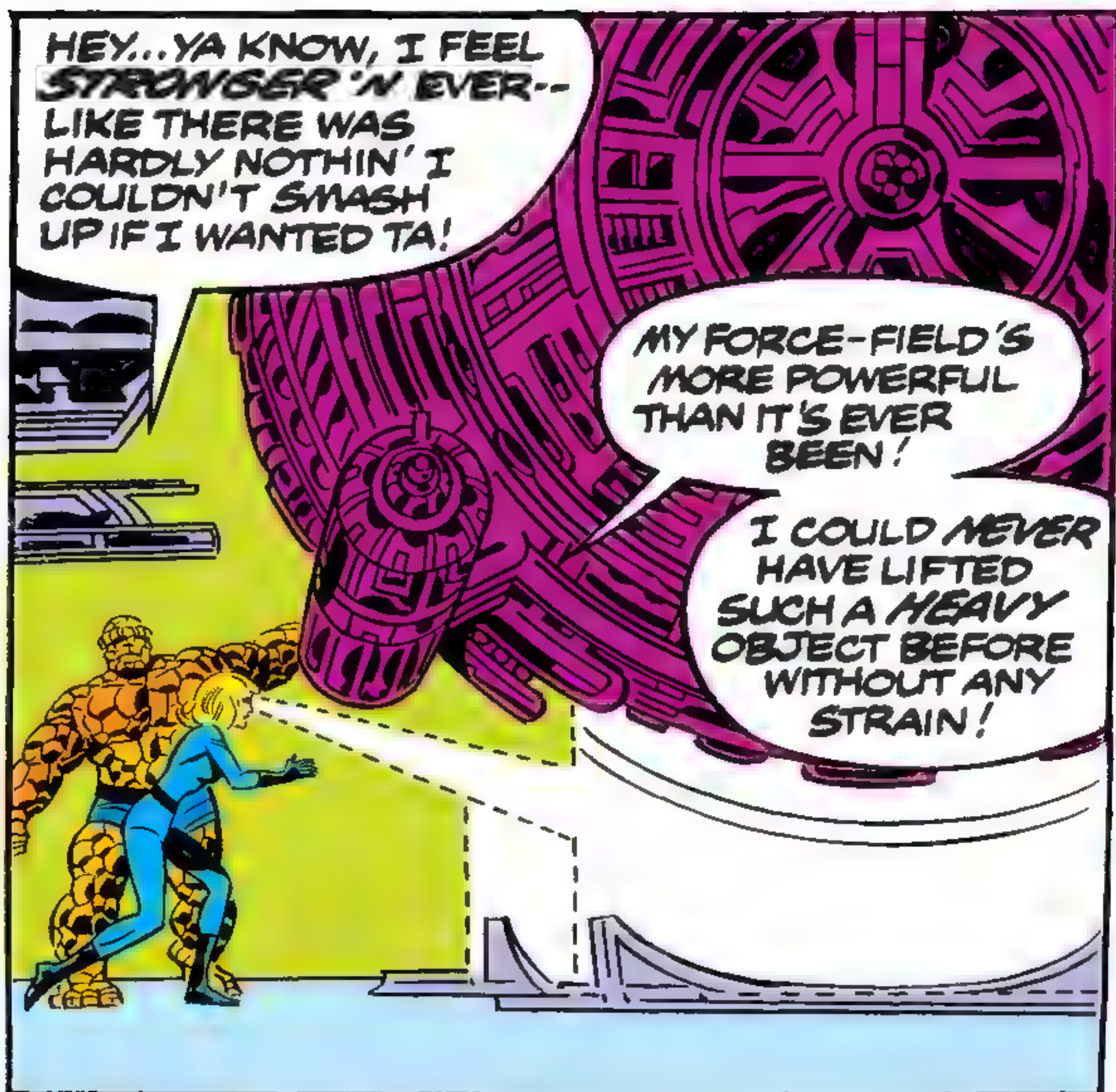
YOUR POWERS
HAVE SAVED US
ON A DOZEN
MISSIONS OR MORE.
WE'D PROBABLY ALL
BE GONE IF IT WEREN'T
FOR YOU.

I DON'T KNOW
ABOUT US PUSHIN' UP
DAISIES... BUT I WOULDN'T
BE HERE HEFTIN' THIS
LITTLE DOODAD IF IT
WEREN'T FOR YOU!

YOU MAY BE
A *SQUIRT*,
KID-- BUT
YER *OUR*
SQUIRT!

AN' DON'T
YA EVER
FERGET IT!





NEXT ISSUE: **BLASTAAR** THE LIVING **BOMBBURST!**

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CODE
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KING-SIZE ANNUAL!

ALL
NEW!

Fantastic Four

HE'S BEEN A CHILD...UNTIL NOW!



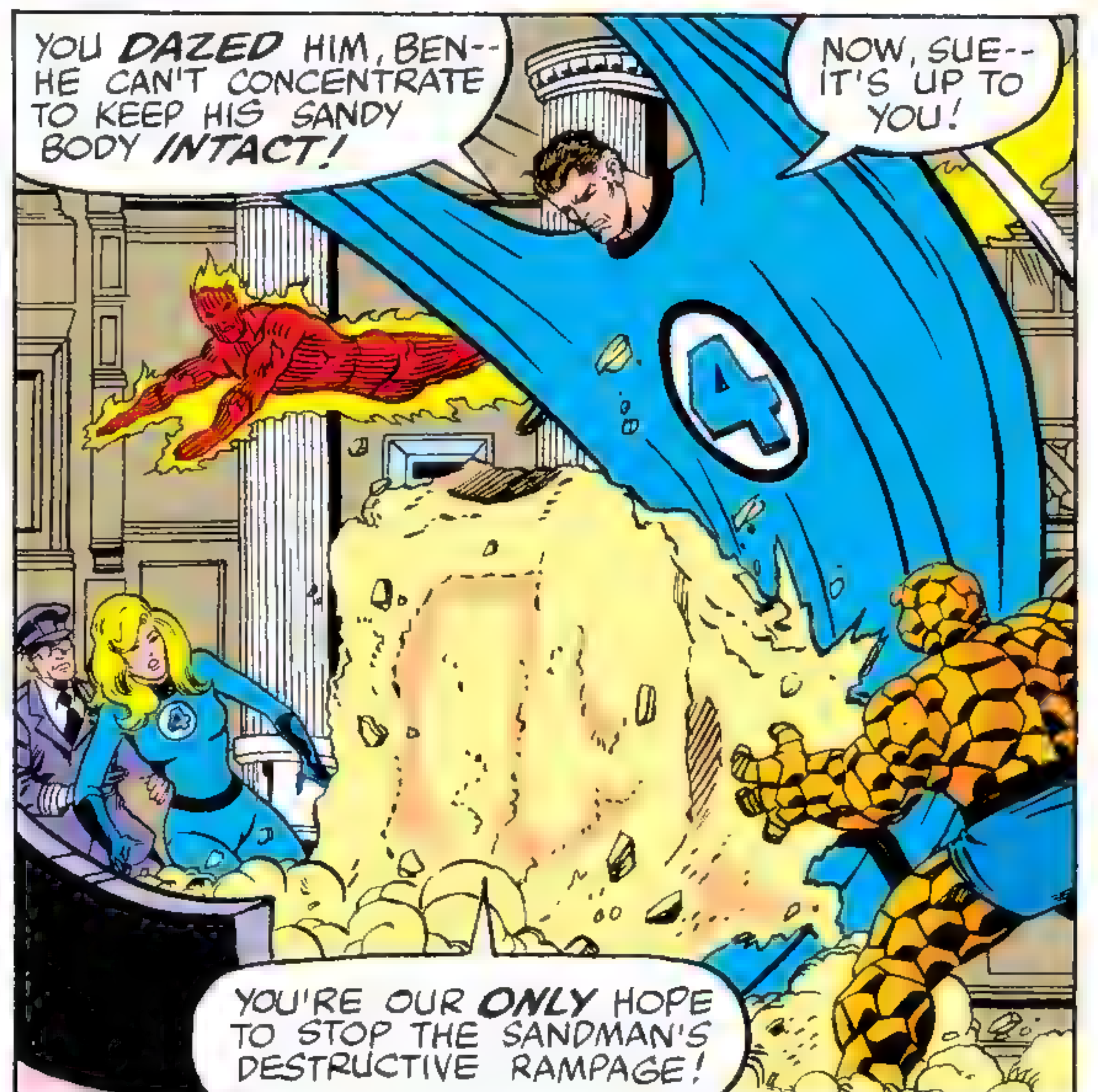
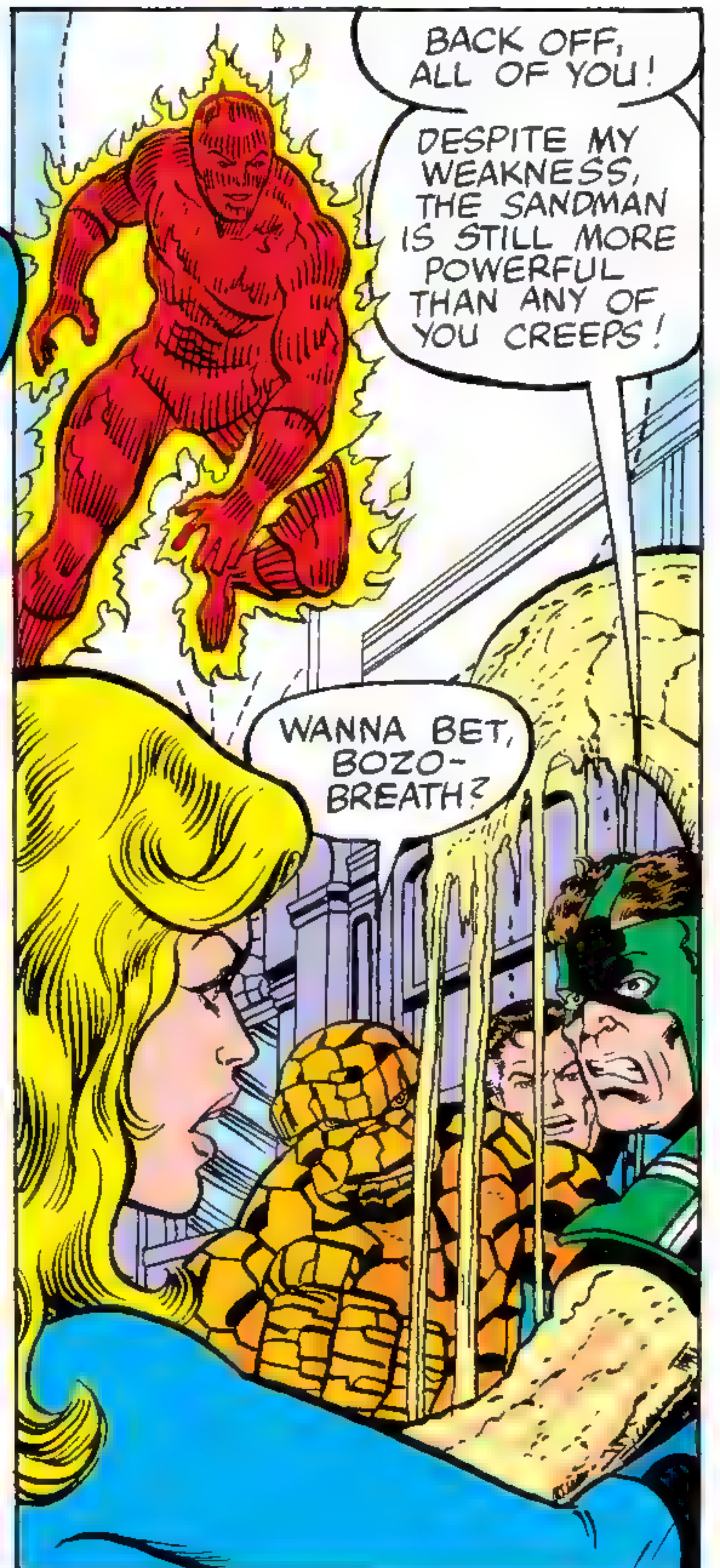
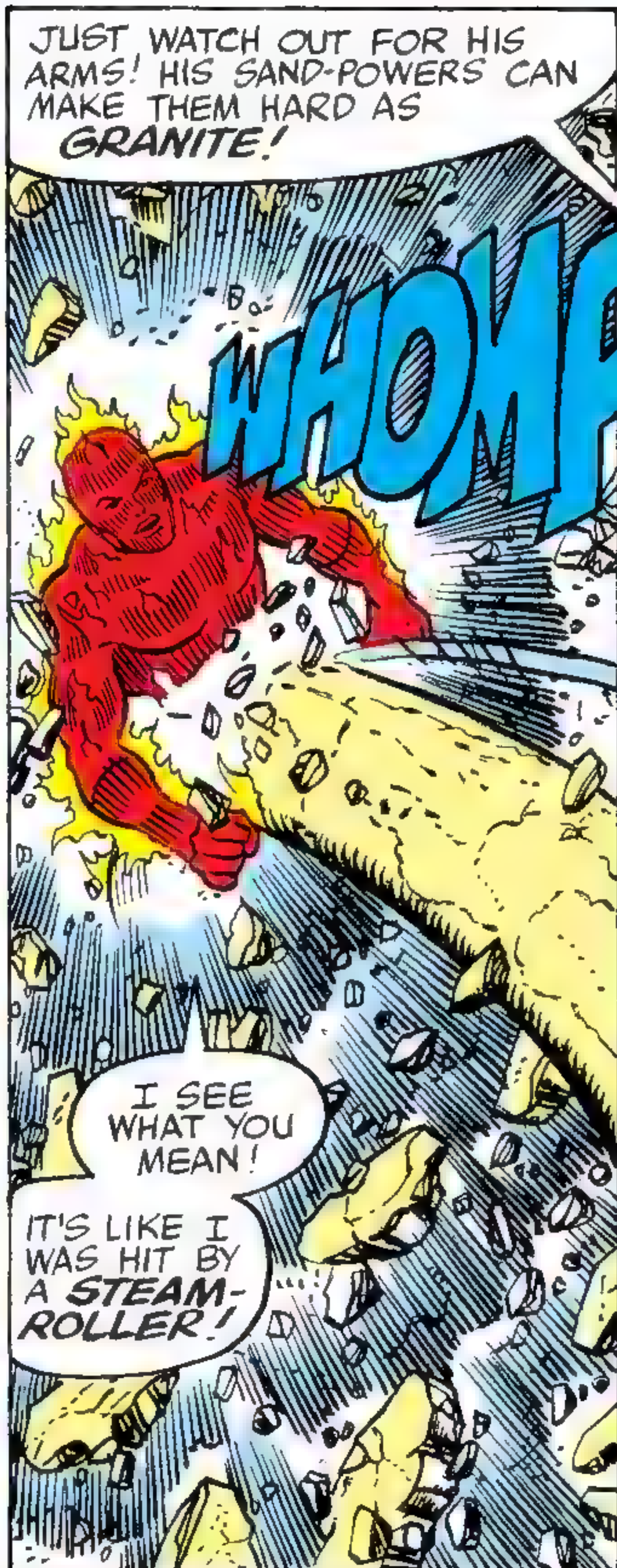
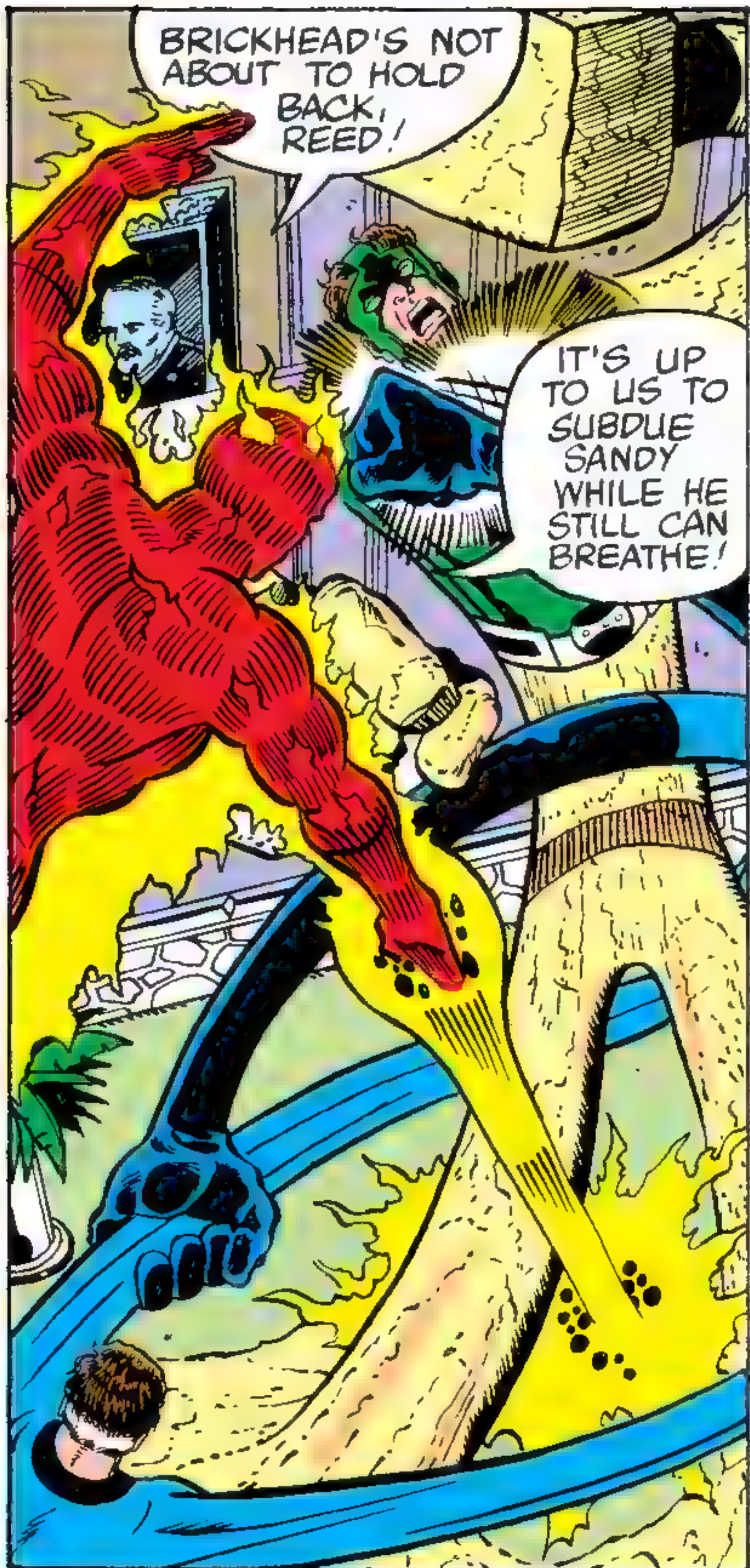
BUT UNLESS HE GROWS UP *FAST*,
THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE *DEAD*!

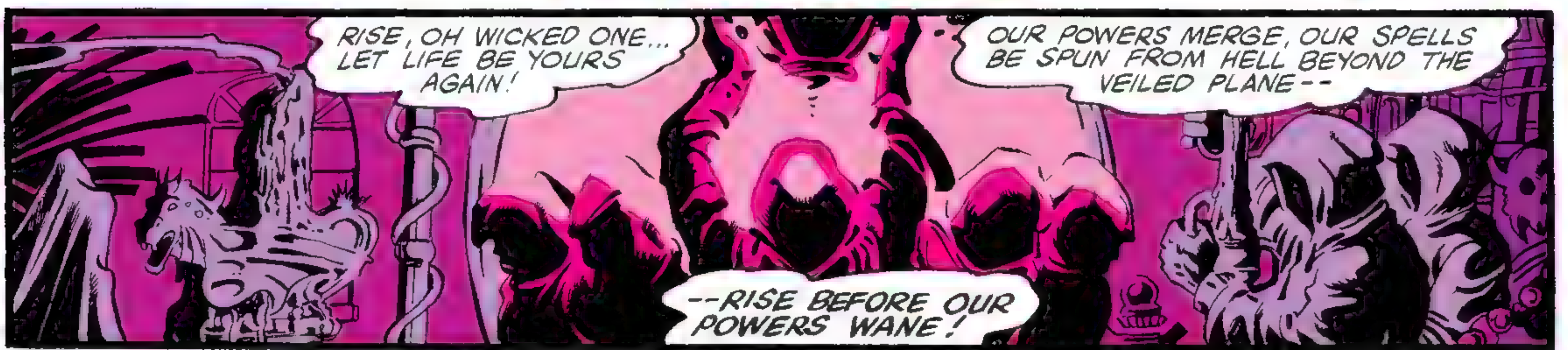
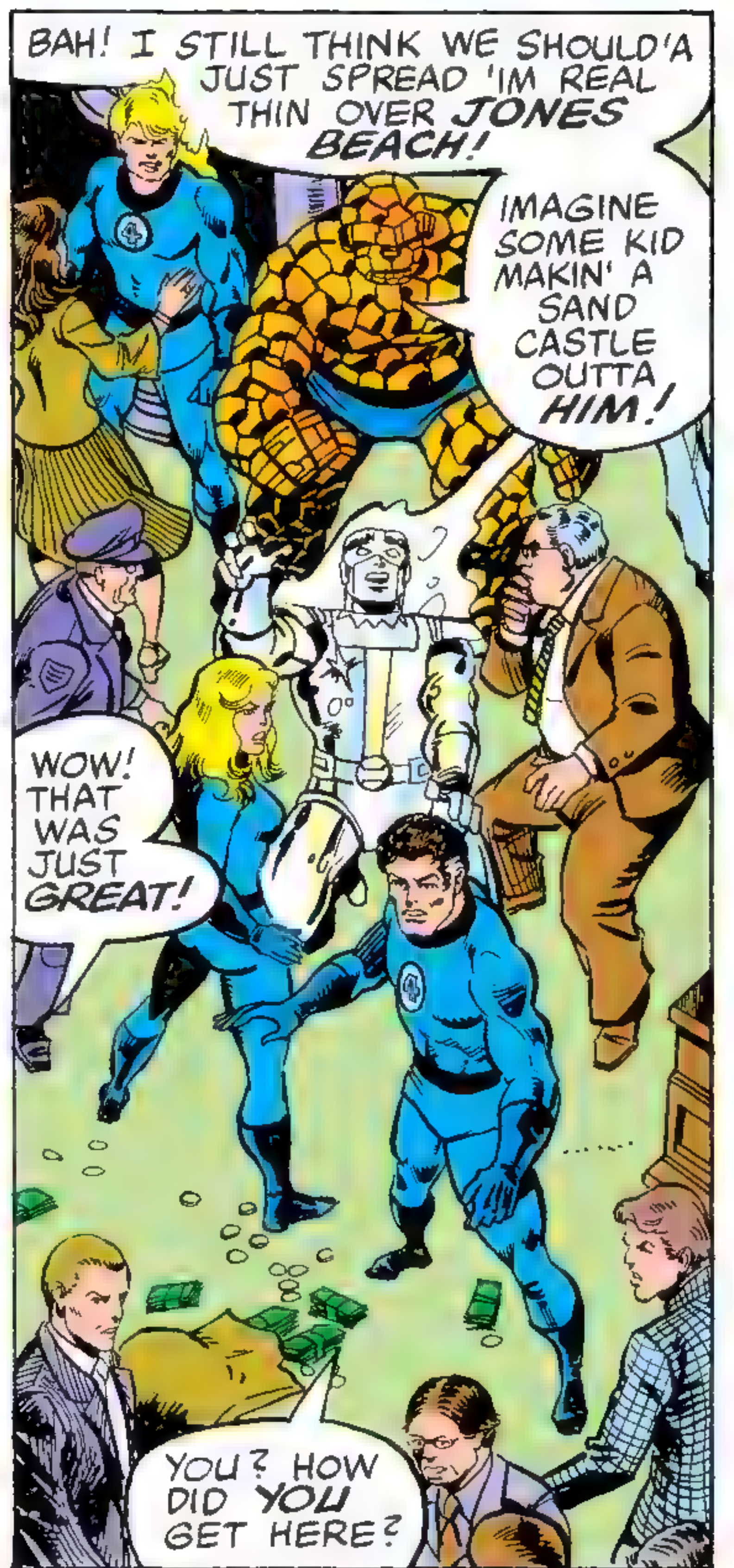
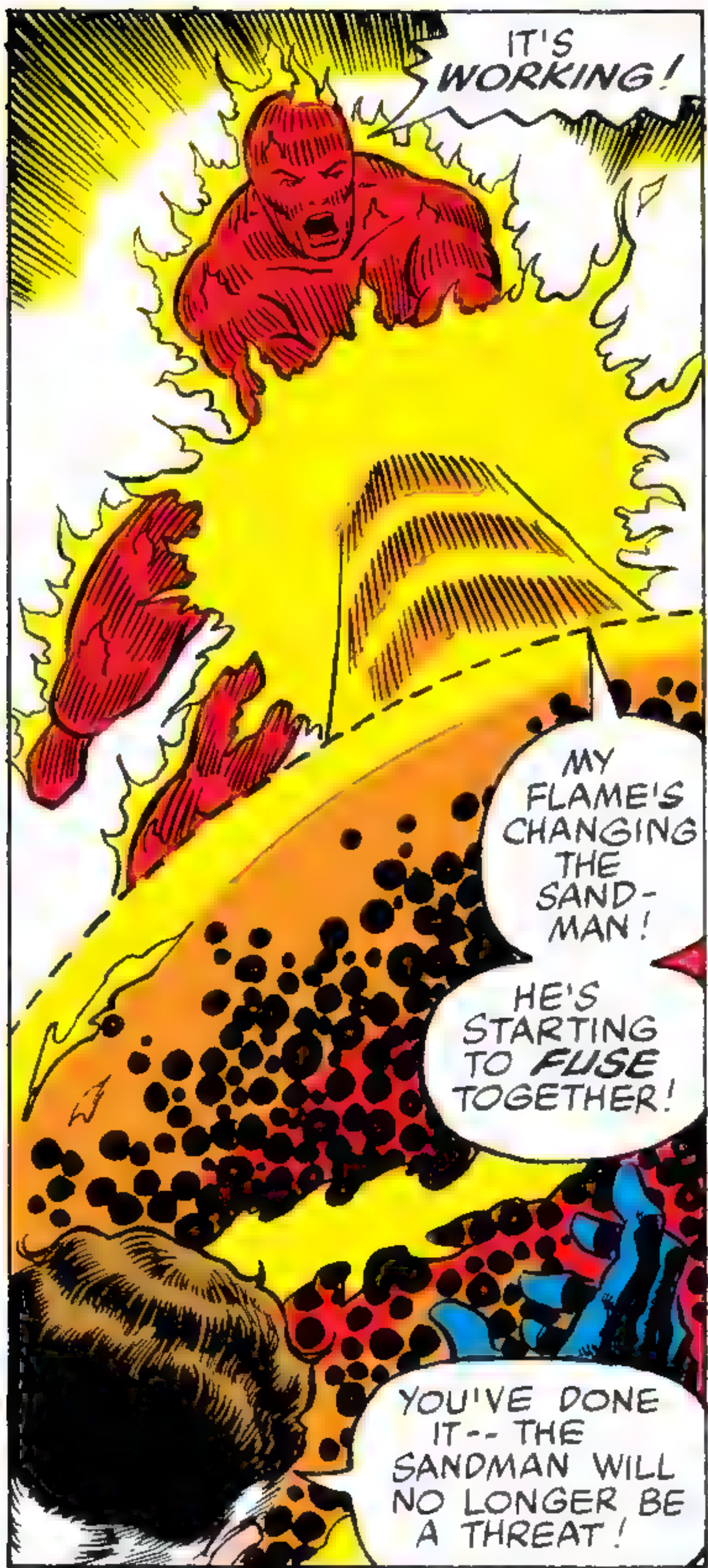
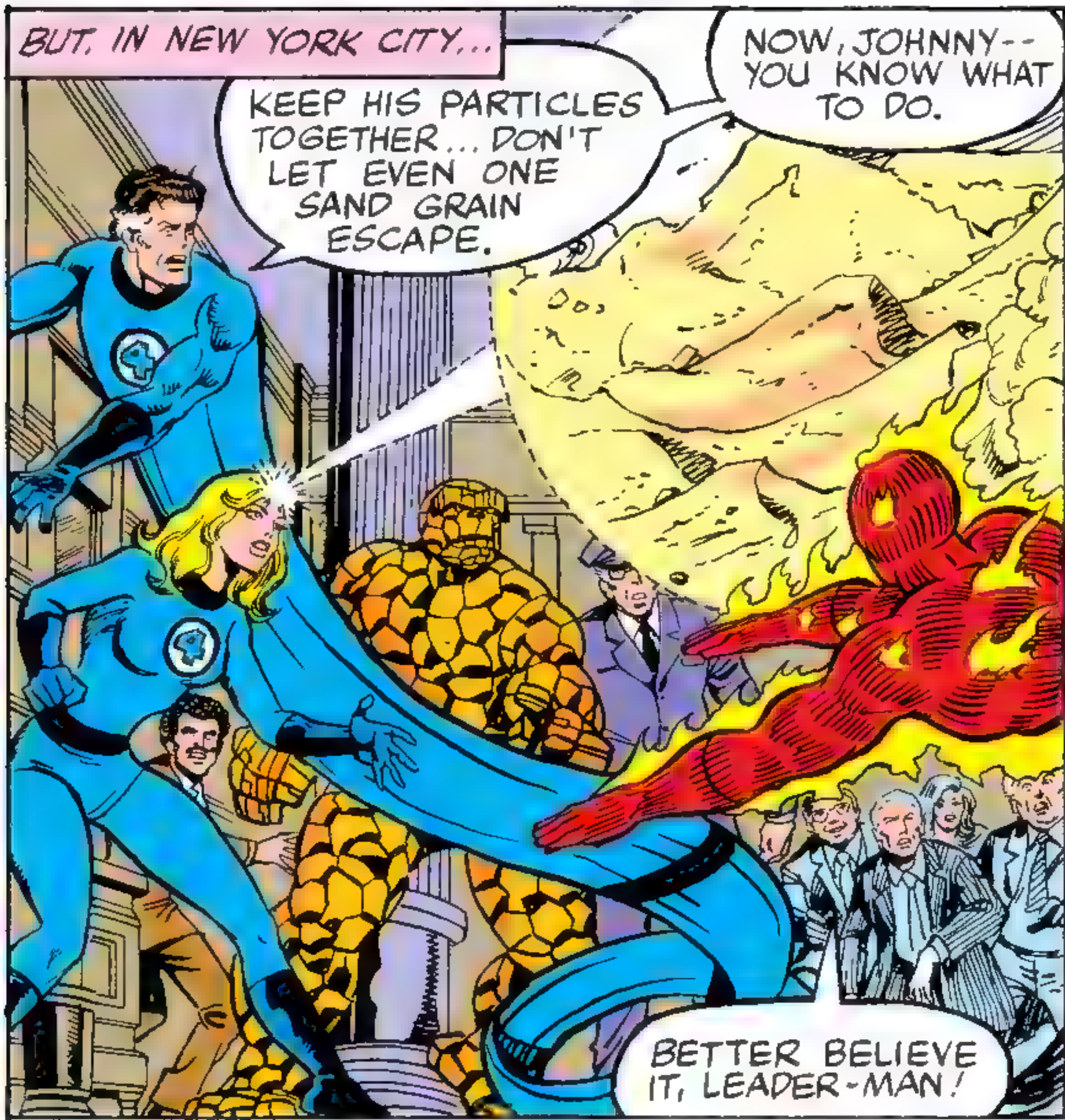
Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

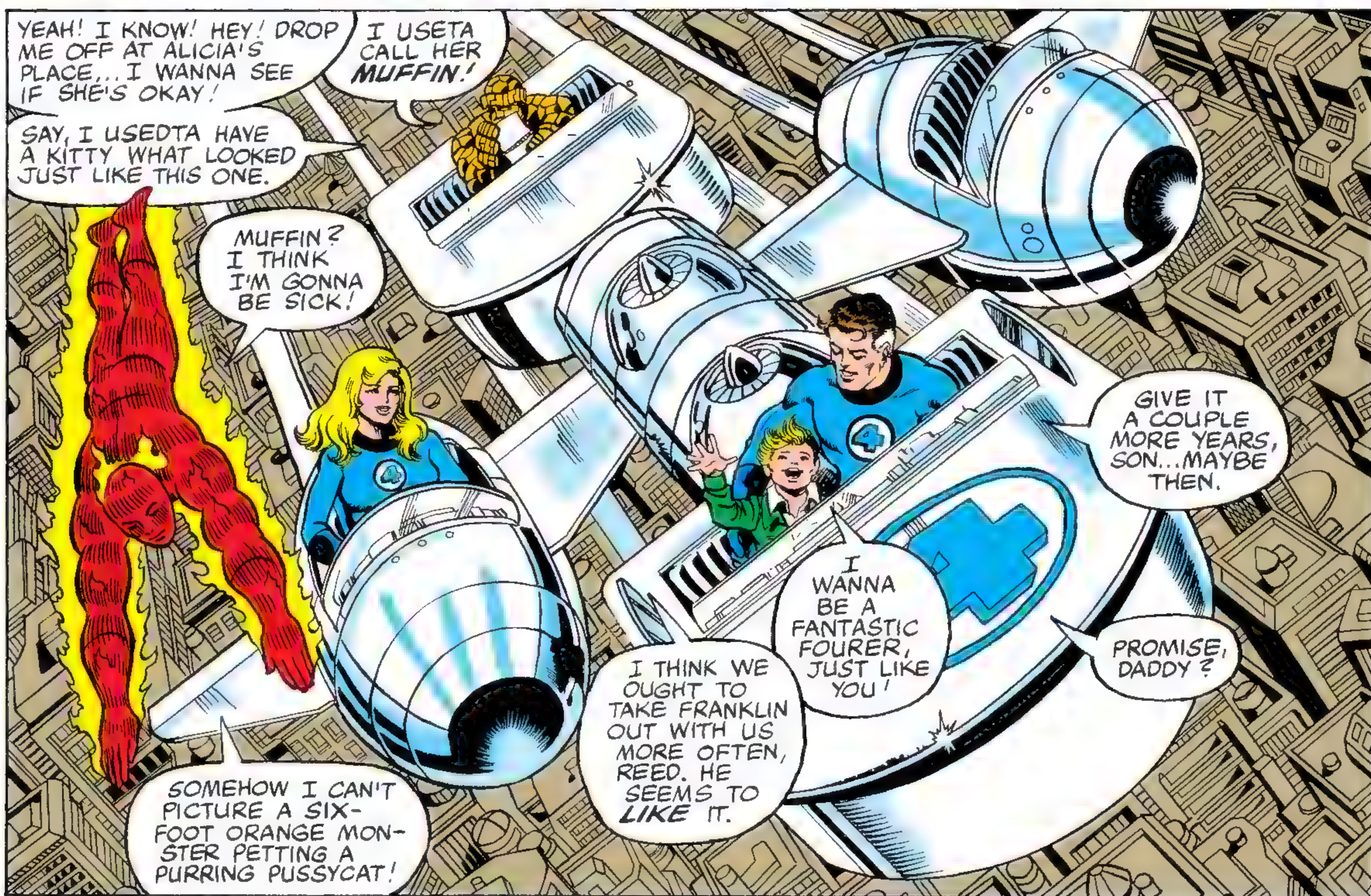
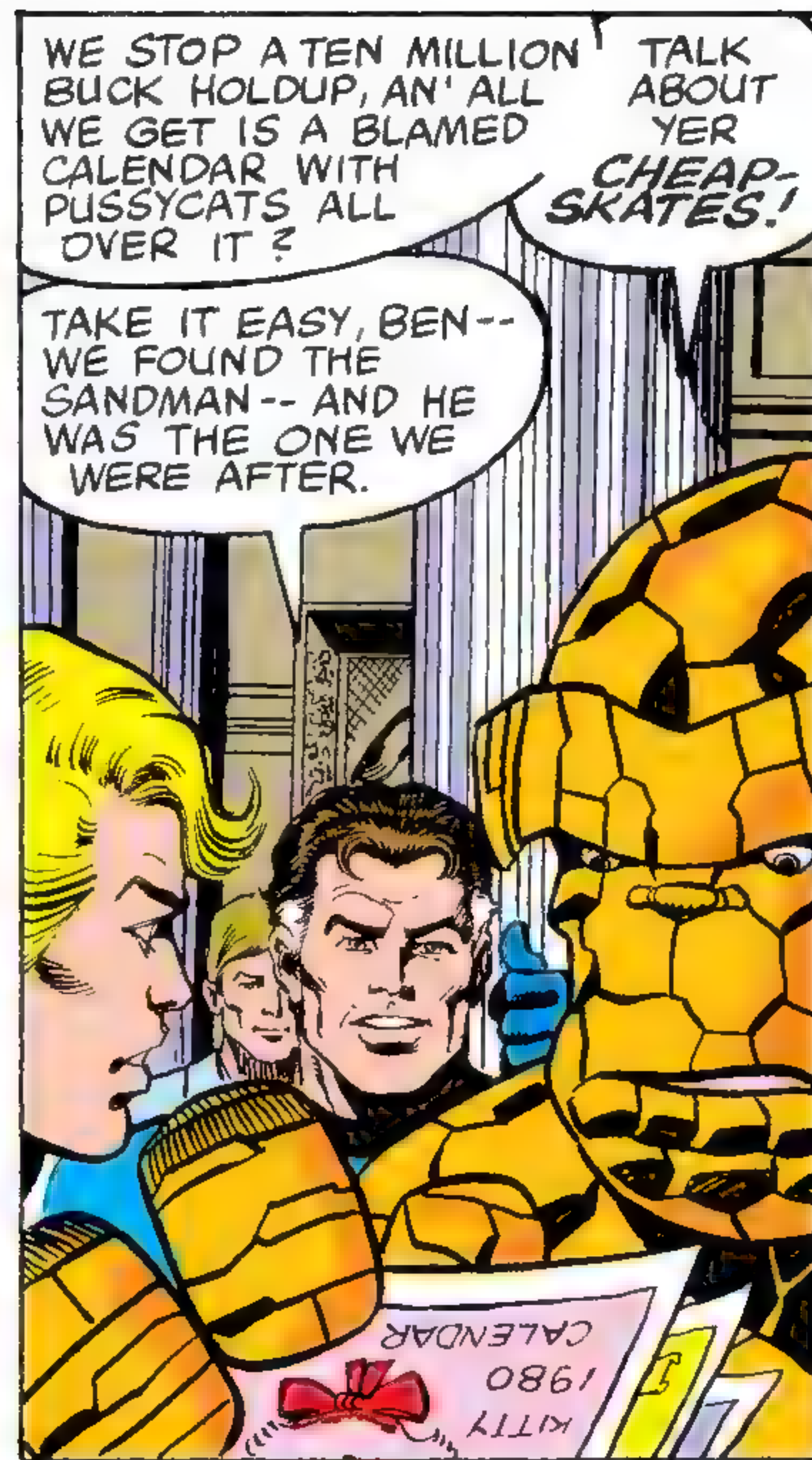
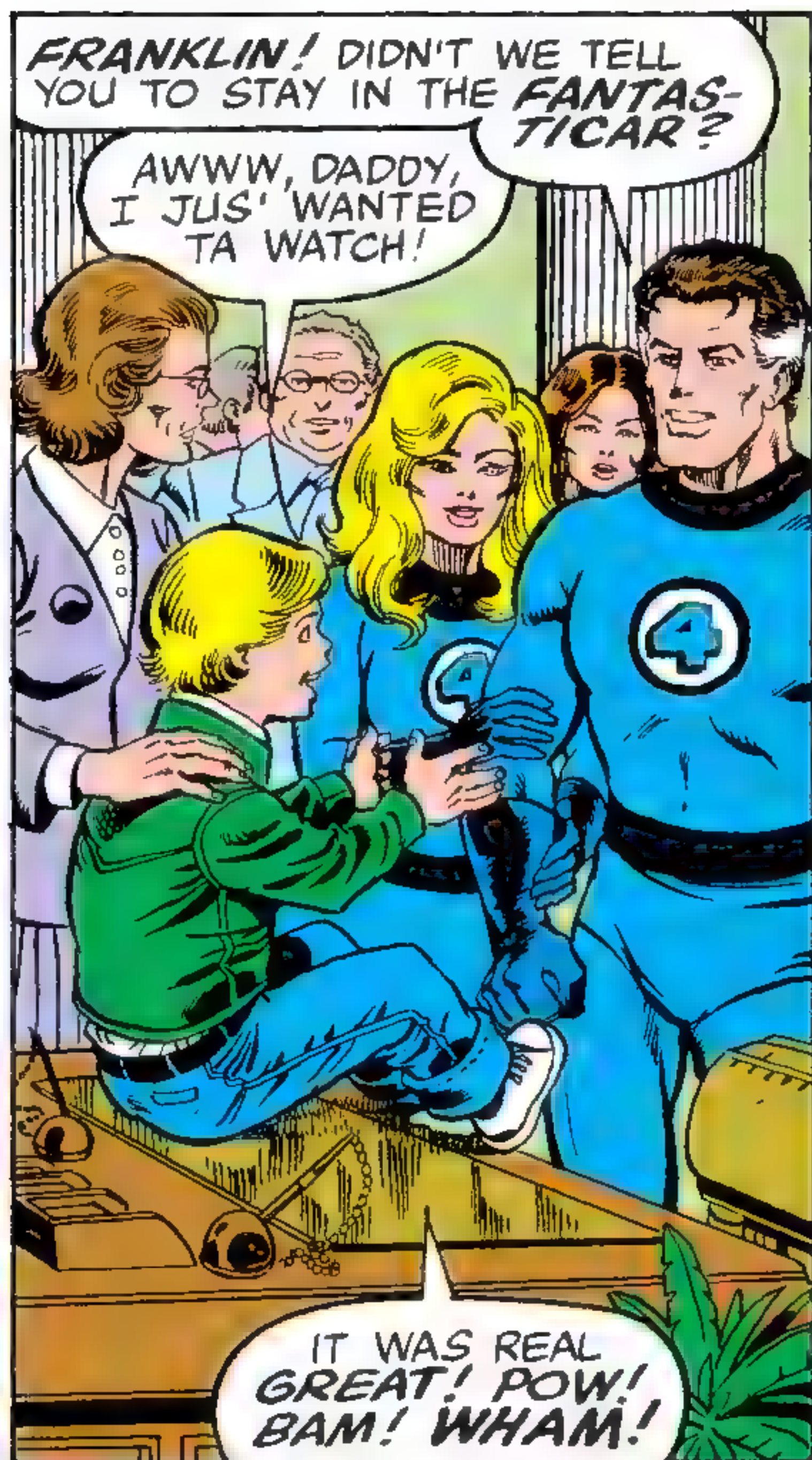
Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR!**

MARY WOLFMAN & GEORGE PÉREZ PABLO MARCOS JIM NOVAK C. GAFFORD JIM SHOOTER
SCRIPT/EDITS -- CO-PLOT -- PENCILS INKS LETTERS COLORS CONSULTING EDITS











POOR ALICIA... SHE LOOKED KINDA **TIRED** AFTER ALL SHE'D GONE THRU.

TIRED, BUT SAFE, BEN! THE SANDMAN DIDN'T HURT HER!

HE WOULDN'TA **DARED!**

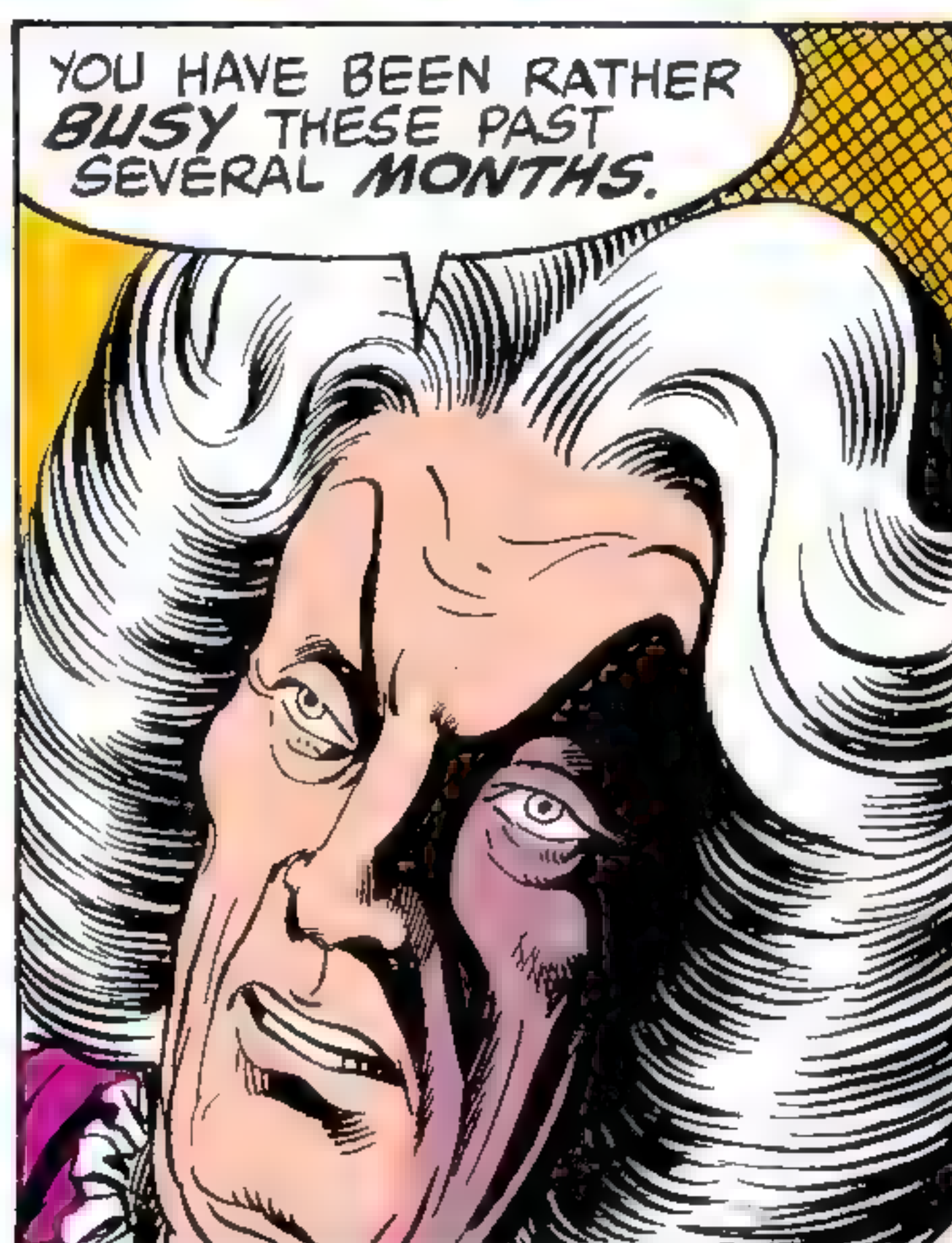


IF HE EVEN HURT ONE LITTLE **HAIR** ON HER GORGEOUS HEAD, I'D'VE DEMOLISHED THE CREEP!

WELL, WELL, IF IT AIN'T AGATHA HARKNESS. WHAT ARE YOU DOIN' DOWN HERE FROM WHISPER HILL?



IT IS TIME FOR MY YEARLY **SOJOURN** TO NEW SALEM. I THOUGHT PERHAPS YOU FOUR WOULD ENJOY ACCOMPANYING ME



YOU HAVE BEEN RATHER **BUSY** THESE PAST SEVERAL **MONTHS**.



BUSY? WE TANGLED WITH GALACTUS, SMASHED THE SPHINX, TOOK APART BLASTAAR, AND THAT WAS BEFORE **LUNCH!**

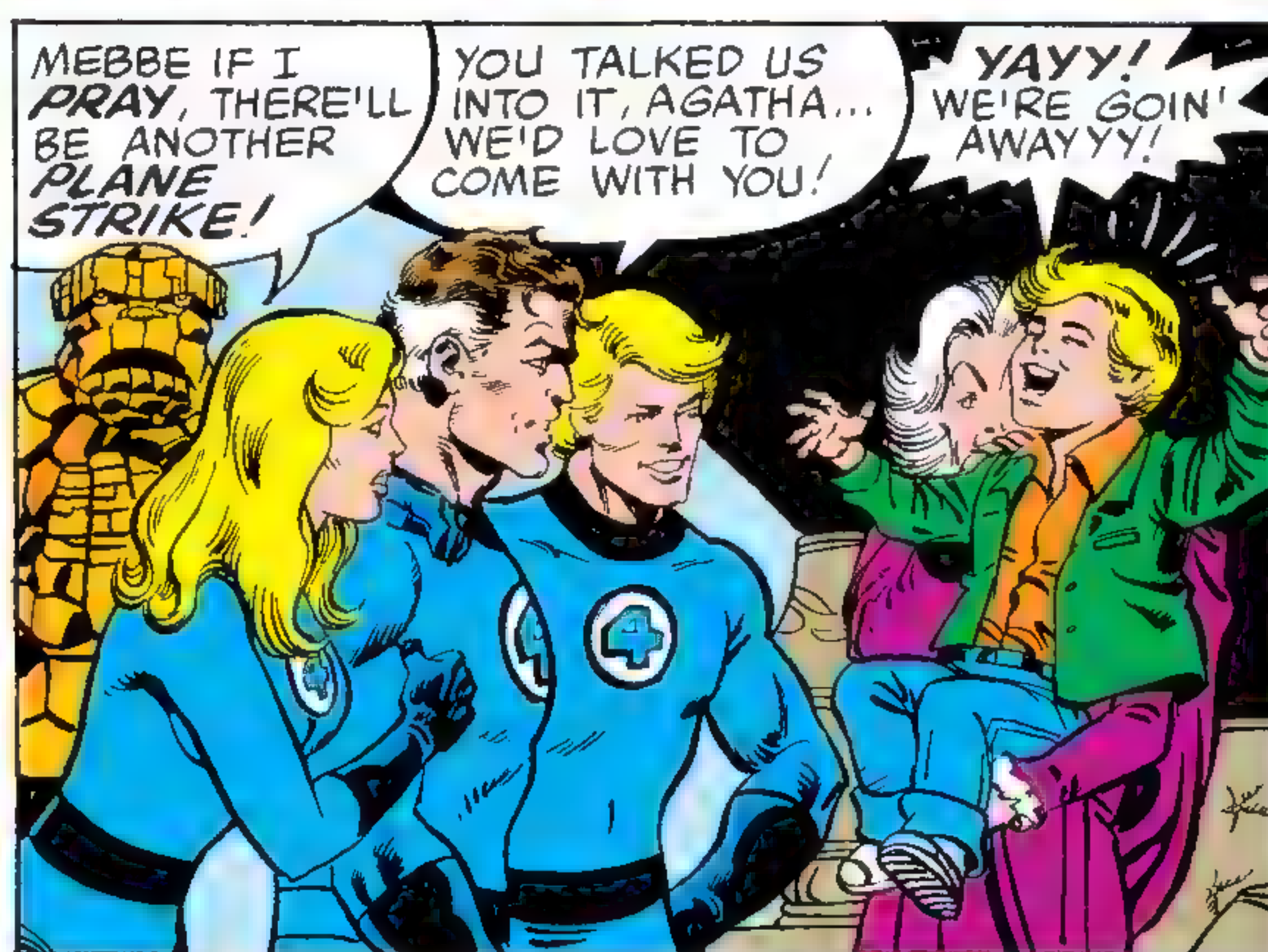
BUT... NEW SALEM? AIN'T THAT WHERE ALL YOU **WITCHES** COME FROM?



I THINK AGATHA'S RIGHT... WE NEED SOME TIME AWAY FROM THE CITY...

WELL, WE **COULD** USE THE REST.

SO HOWZA-BOUT GOIN' TA **DISNEY-WORLD?**



MEBBE IF I **PRAY**, THERE'LL BE ANOTHER **PLANE STRIKE!**

YOU TALKED US INTO IT, AGATHA... WE'D LOVE TO COME WITH YOU!

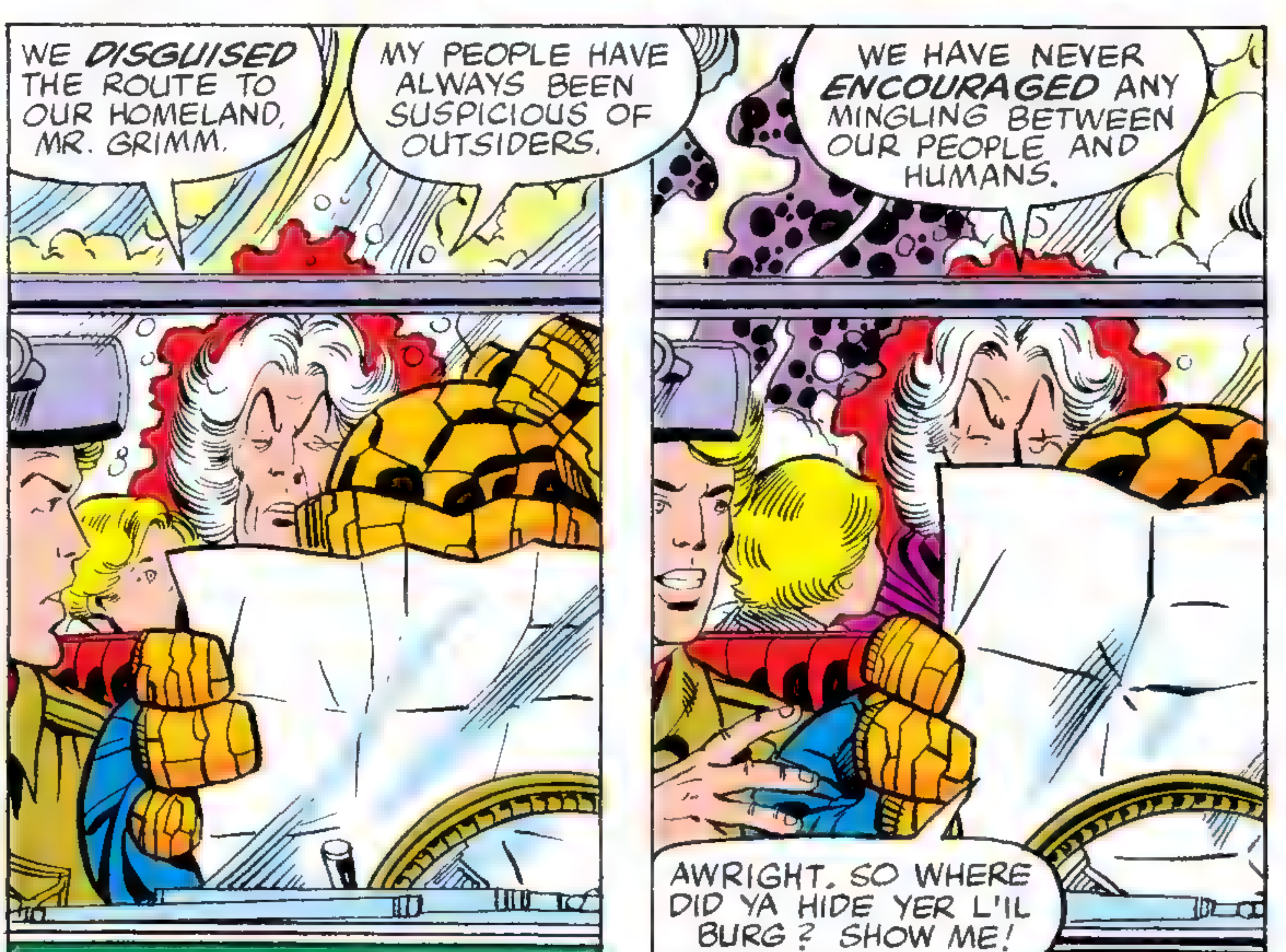
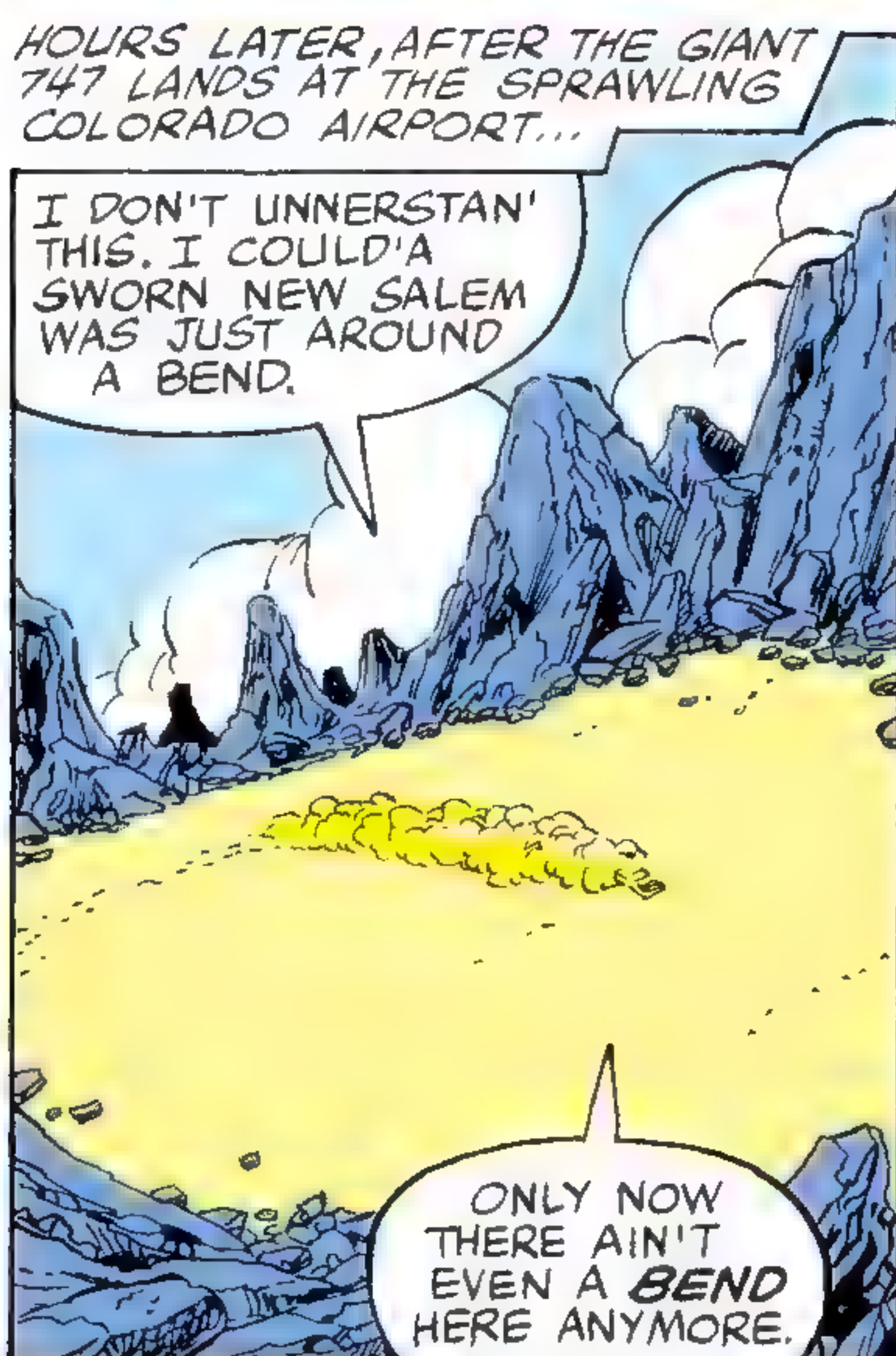
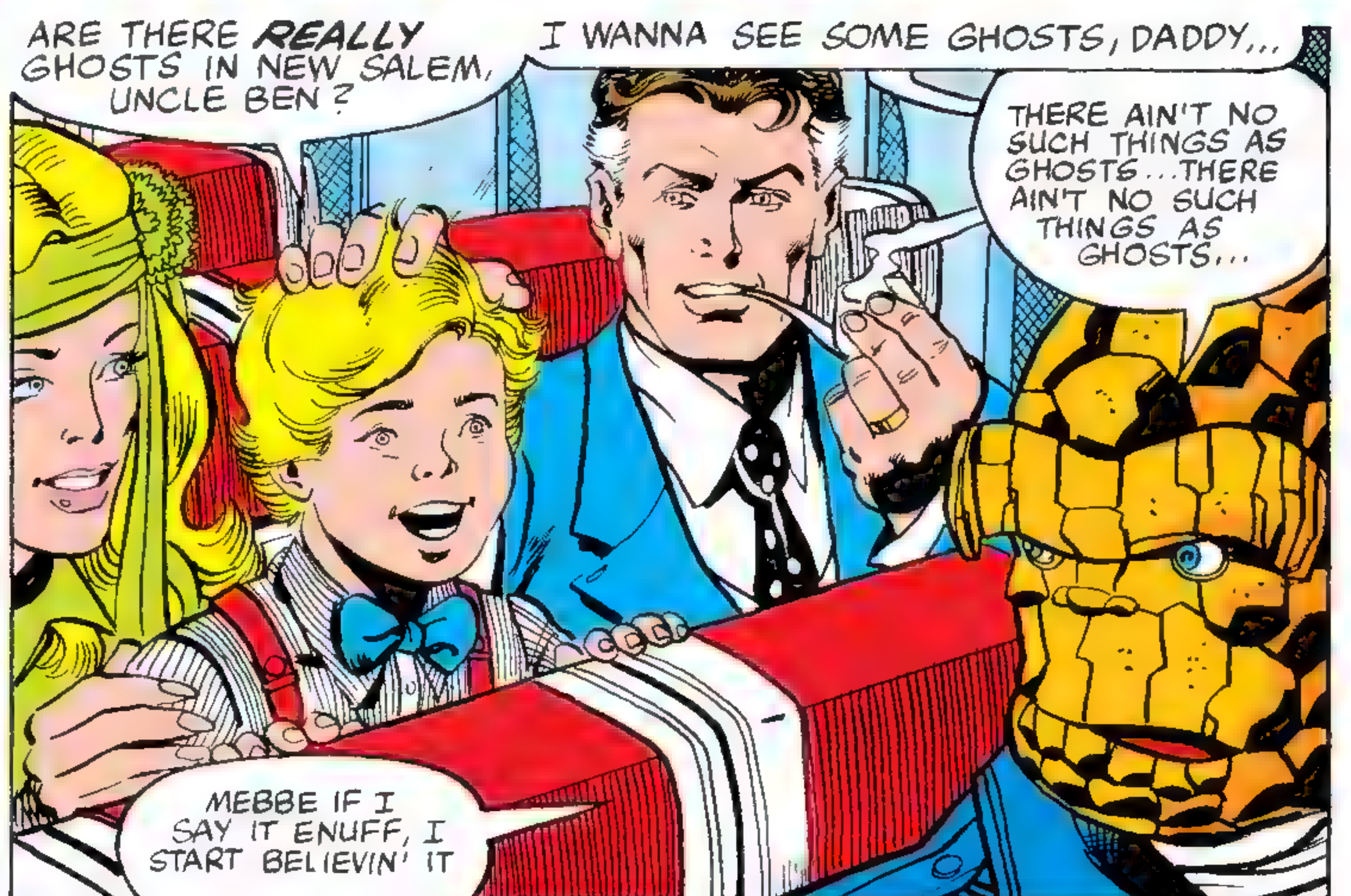
YAYY! WE'RE GOIN' AWAYYY!



DO YOU THINK IT WISE?

DO WE HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICE?

WHEN THE ANNUAL CEREMONY BEGINS, THAT IS WHEN WE MAKE OUR MOVE.

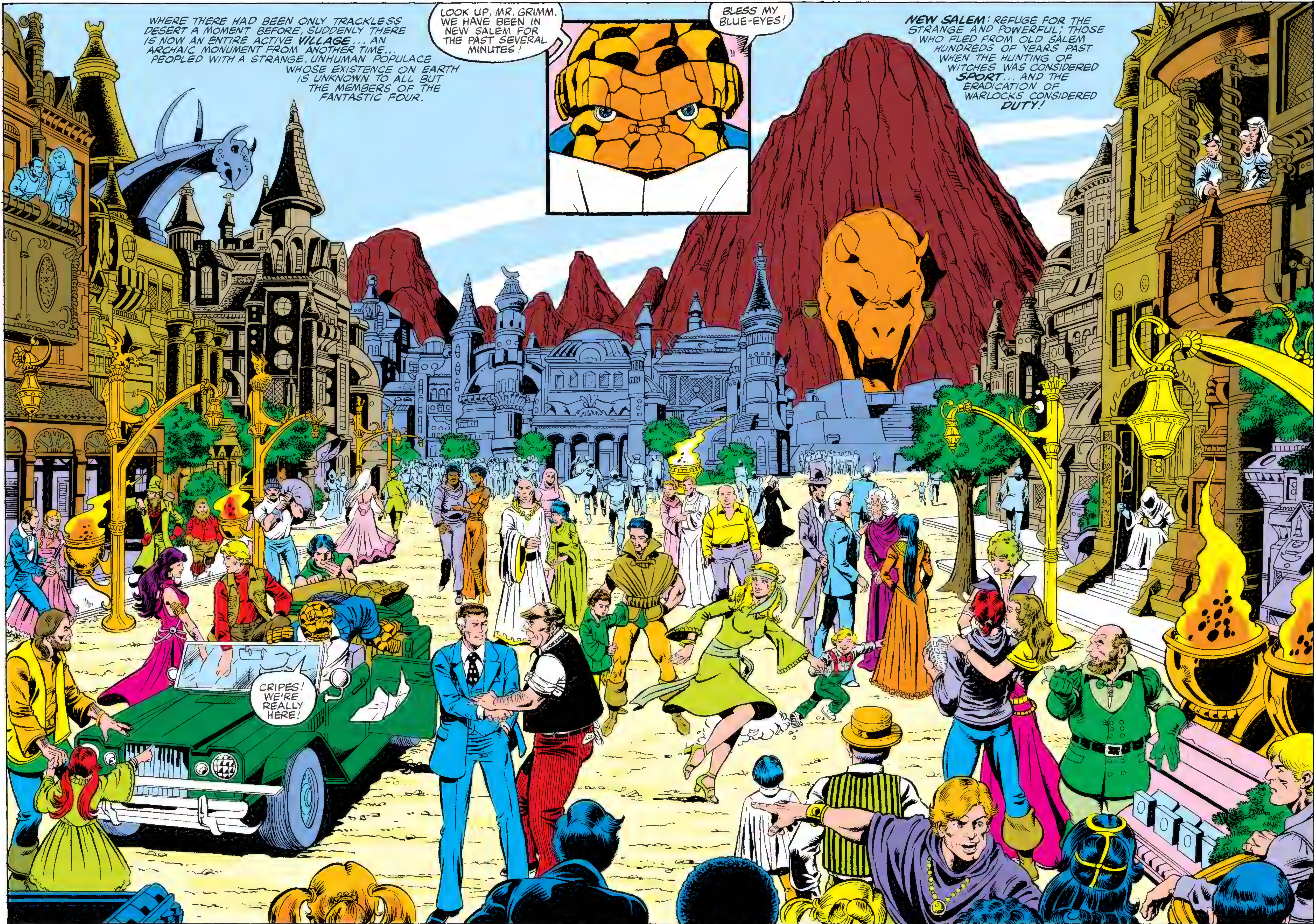
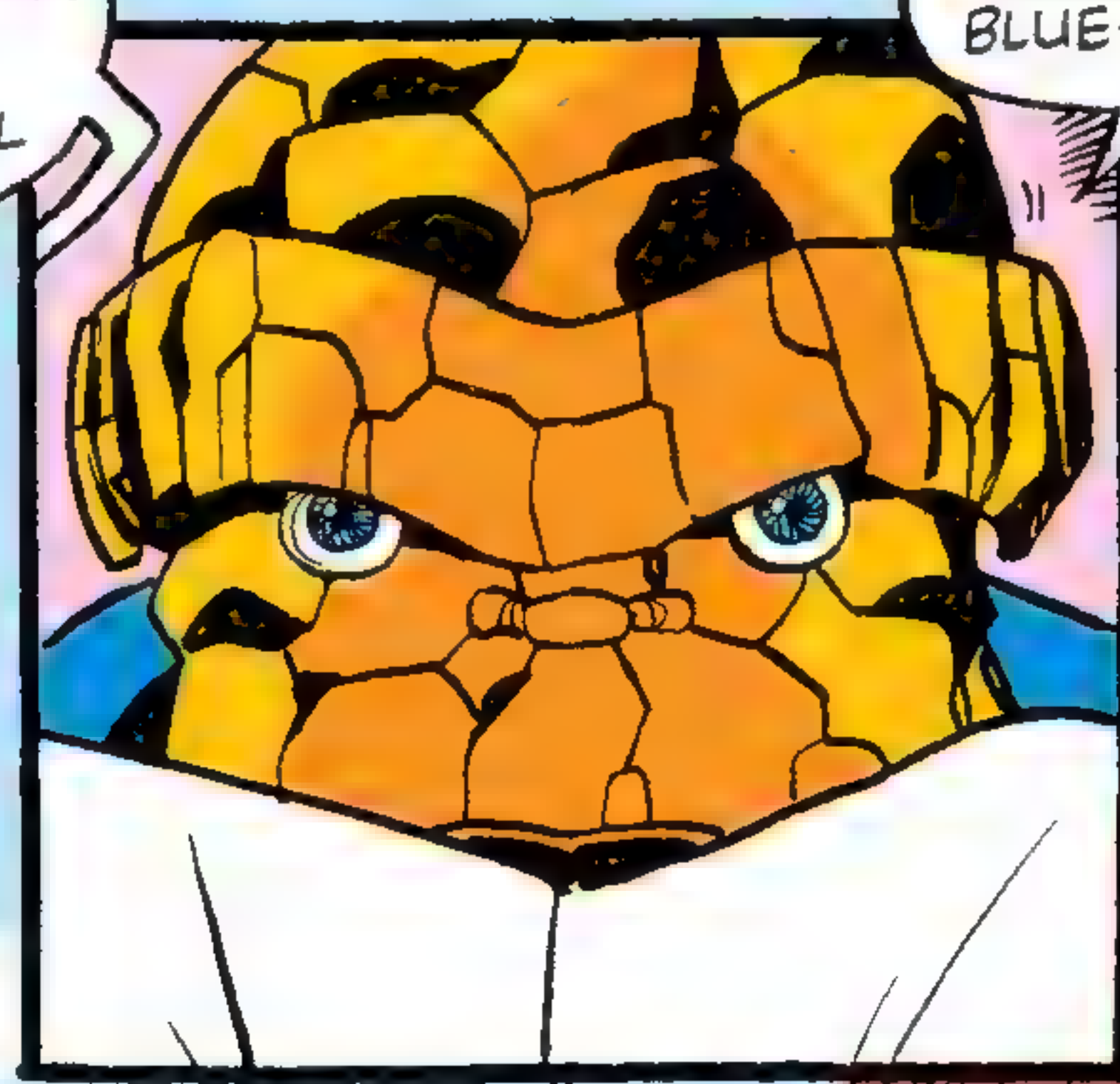


WHERE THERE HAD BEEN ONLY TRACKLESS DESERT A MOMENT BEFORE, SUDDENLY THERE IS NOW AN ENTIRE ACTIVE VILLAGE... AN ARCHAIC MONUMENT FROM ANOTHER TIME... PEOPLED WITH A STRANGE, UNHUMAN POPULACE WHOSE EXISTENCE ON EARTH IS UNKNOWN TO ALL BUT THE MEMBERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

LOOK UP, MR. GRIMM. WE HAVE BEEN IN NEW SALEM FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MINUTES!

BLESS MY BLUE-EYES!

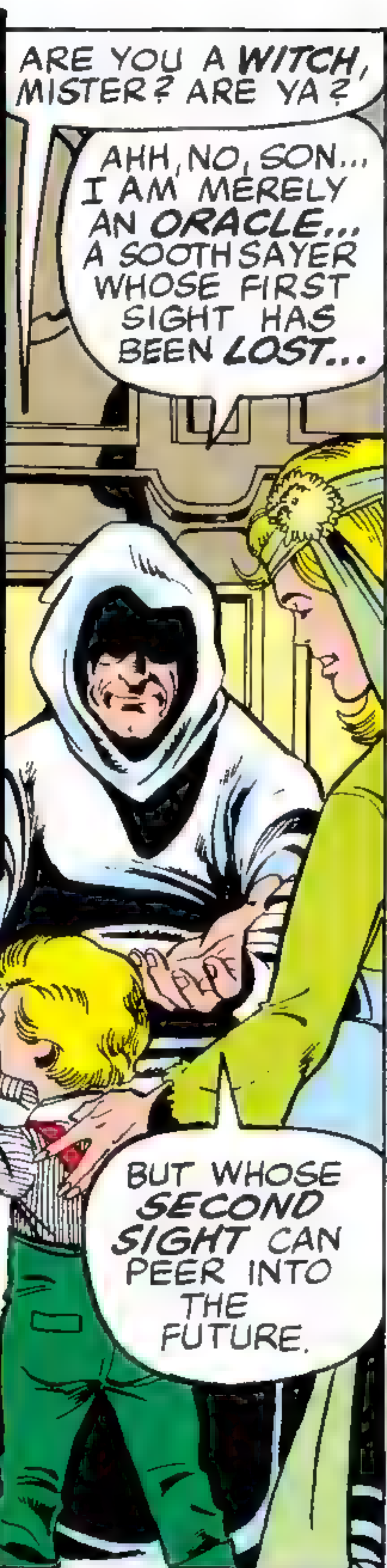
NEW SALEM: REFUGE FOR THE STRANGE AND POWERFUL; THOSE WHO FLED FROM OLD SALEM HUNDREDS OF YEARS PAST WHEN THE HUNTING OF WITCHES WAS CONSIDERED SPORT... AND THE ERADICATION OF WARLOCKS CONSIDERED DUTY!





I DIDN'T KNOW SHE WOULD **BRING THEM!**

IT MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE.



ARE YOU A **WITCH**, MISTER? ARE YA?

AHH, NO, SON... I AM MERELY AN **ORACLE**... A SOOTHAYER WHOSE FIRST SIGHT HAS BEEN **LOST...**

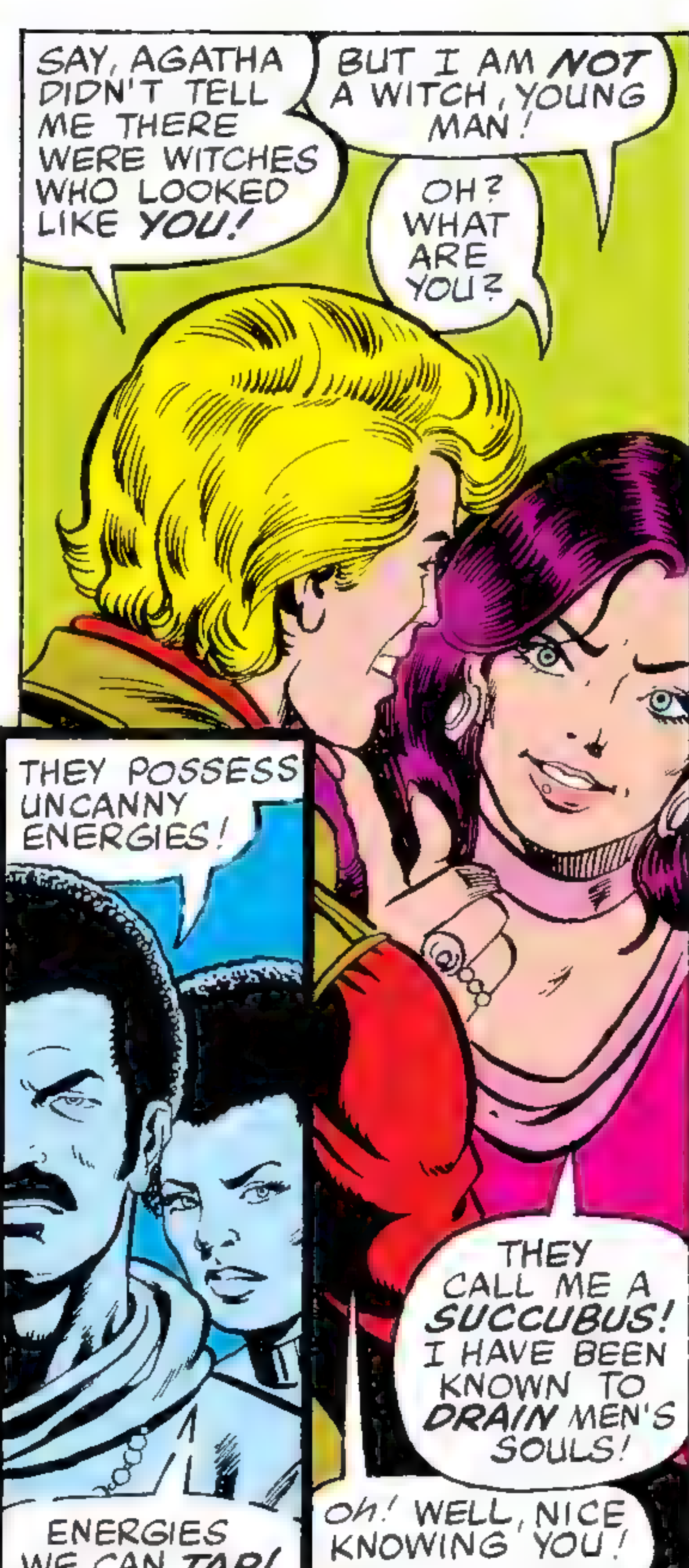
BUT WHOSE **SECOND SIGHT** CAN PEER INTO THE FUTURE.



AYE, STRANGER, I BE LIVIN' HERE NIGH ONTO FOUR CENTURIES NOW!

NAY, REPTILLA... DO YOU RE-MEMBER THE MASTER'S INTEREST IN THEIR POWER?

YA DON'T LOOK A DAY OVER TWO!



SAY, AGATHA DIDN'T TELL ME THERE WERE WITCHES WHO LOOKED LIKE YOU!

BUT I AM **NOT** A WITCH, YOUNG MAN!

OH? WHAT ARE YOU?

THEY POSSESS **UNCANNY ENERGIES!**

ENERGIES WE CAN **TAP!**

THEY CALL ME A **SUCCUBUS!** I HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO **DRAIN MEN'S SOULS!**

OH! WELL, NICE KNOWING YOU!

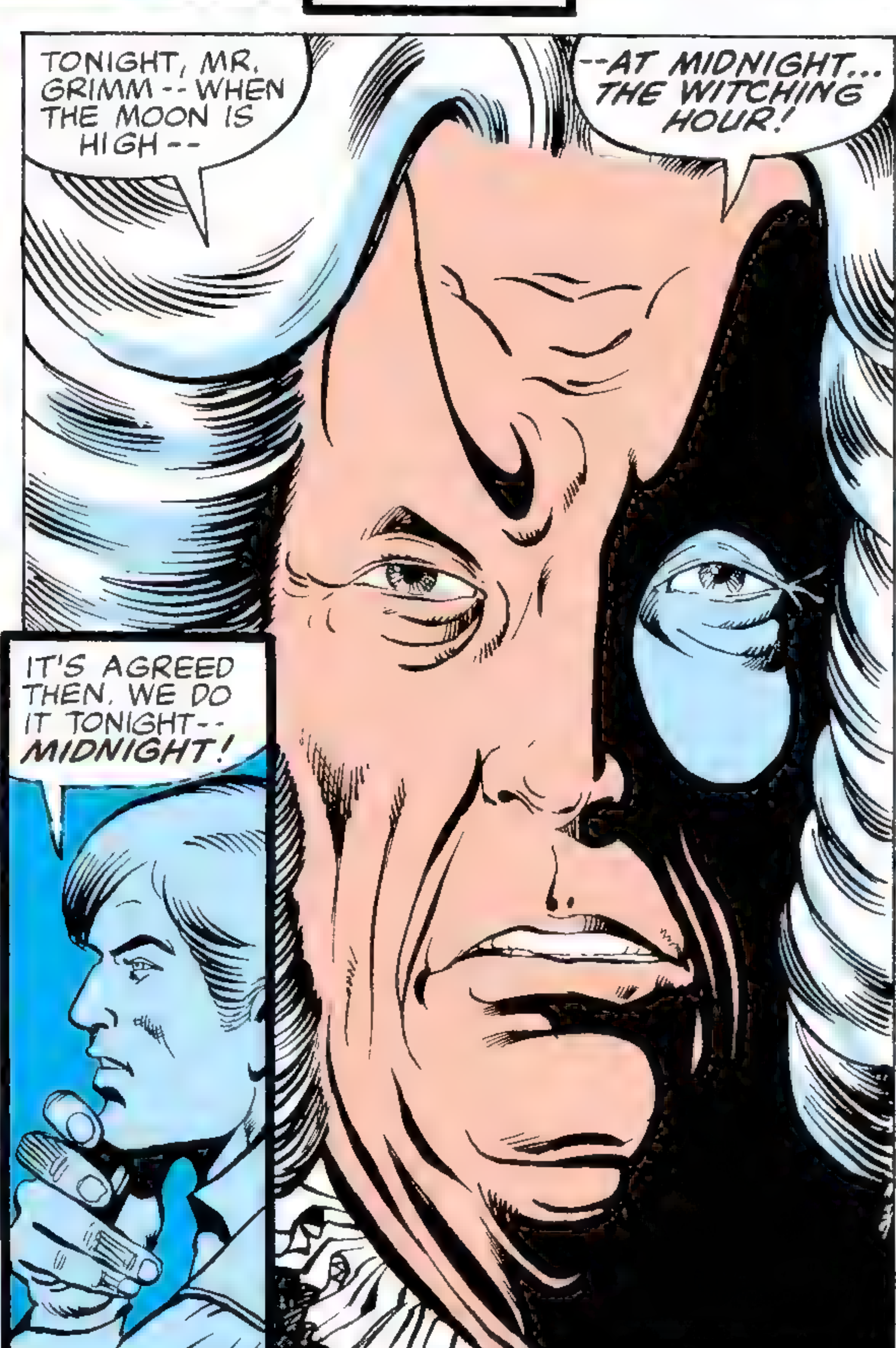


BUT ONLY AS A **LAST RESORT**, VERTIGO!



FRIENDS, MY PEOPLE WOULD BE **HONORED** TO HAVE YOU SHARE IN OUR CEREMONY OF RENEWAL.

WHEN DOES THIS SHINDIG BEGIN?

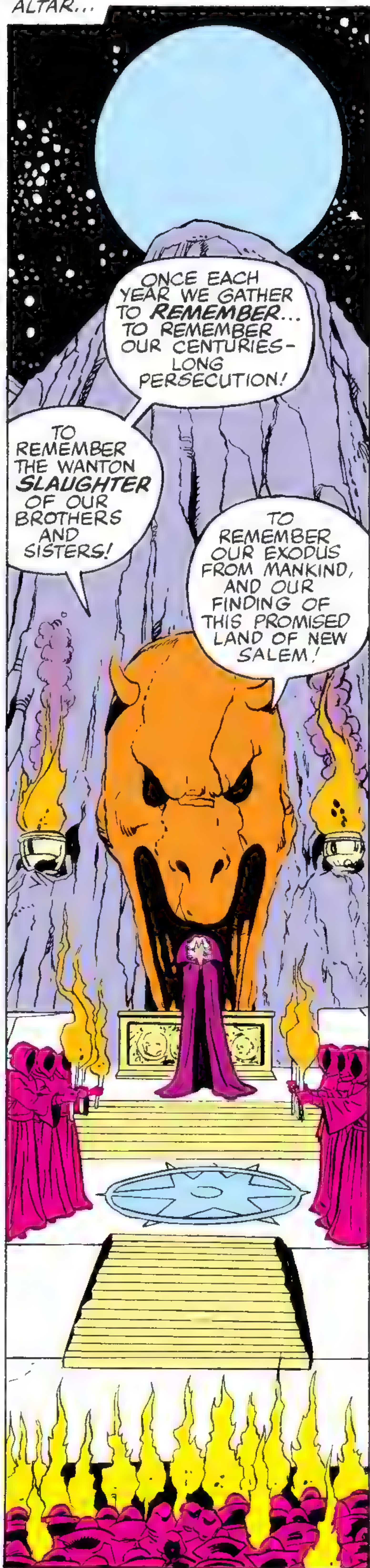


TONIGHT, MR. GRIMM -- WHEN THE MOON IS HIGH --

--AT MIDNIGHT... THE **WITCHING HOUR!**

IT'S AGREED THEN. WE DO IT TONIGHT-- **MIDNIGHT!**

THE FULL MOON HANGS LIKE A GLOWING BEACON IN THE EBONY NIGHT SKY. BELOW, THE ROBED THROG GATHERS IN SILENCE AS AGATHA HARKNESS STEPS PROUDLY, REGALLY, TO THE CENTER ALTAR...



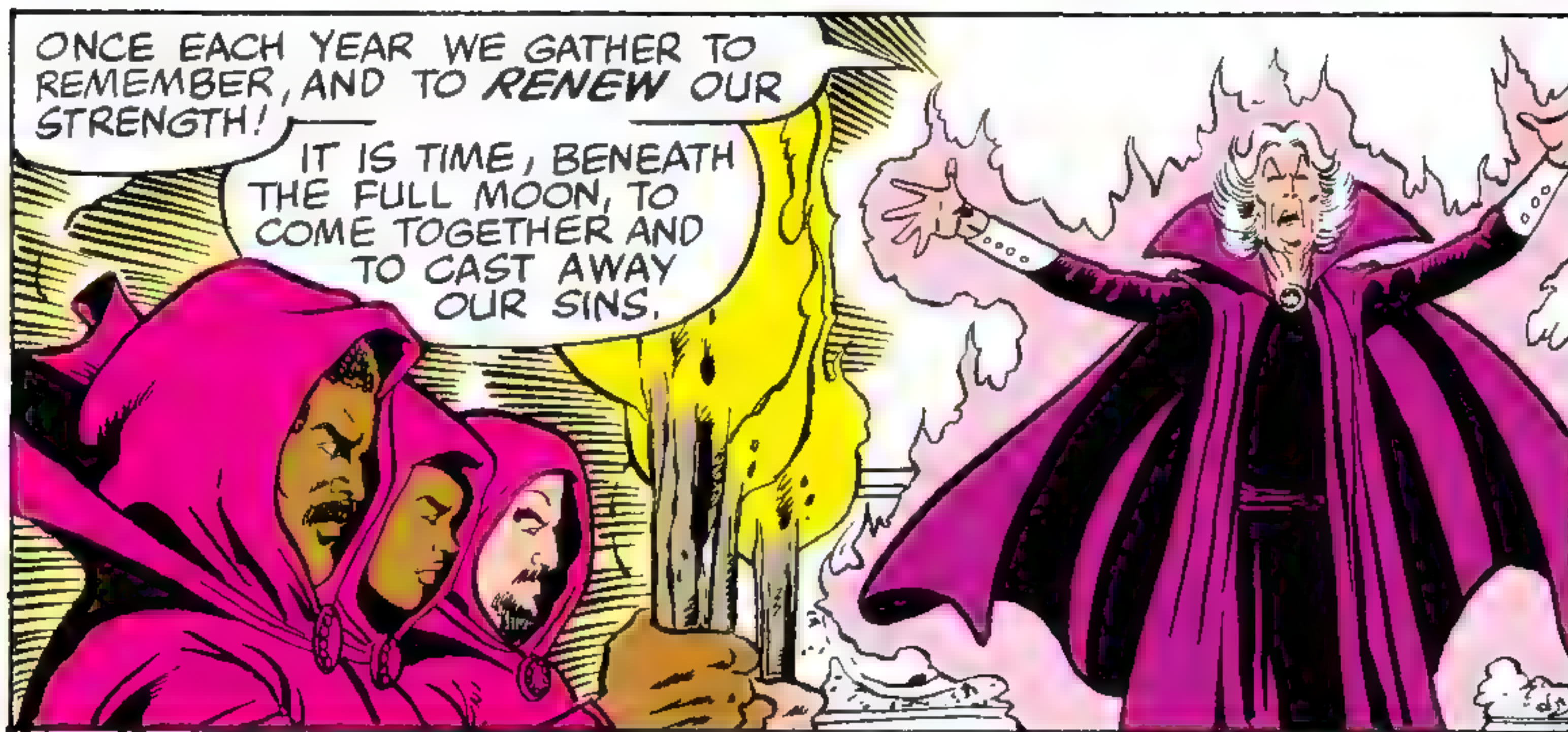
ONCE EACH YEAR WE GATHER TO REMEMBER... TO REMEMBER OUR CENTURIES-LONG PERSECUTION!

TO REMEMBER THE WANTON **SLAUGHTER** OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS!

TO REMEMBER OUR EXODUS FROM MANKIND, AND OUR FINDING OF THIS PROMISED LAND OF NEW SALEM!

ONCE EACH YEAR WE GATHER TO REMEMBER, AND TO **RENEW** OUR STRENGTH!

IT IS TIME, BENEATH THE FULL MOON, TO COME TOGETHER AND TO CAST AWAY OUR SINS.

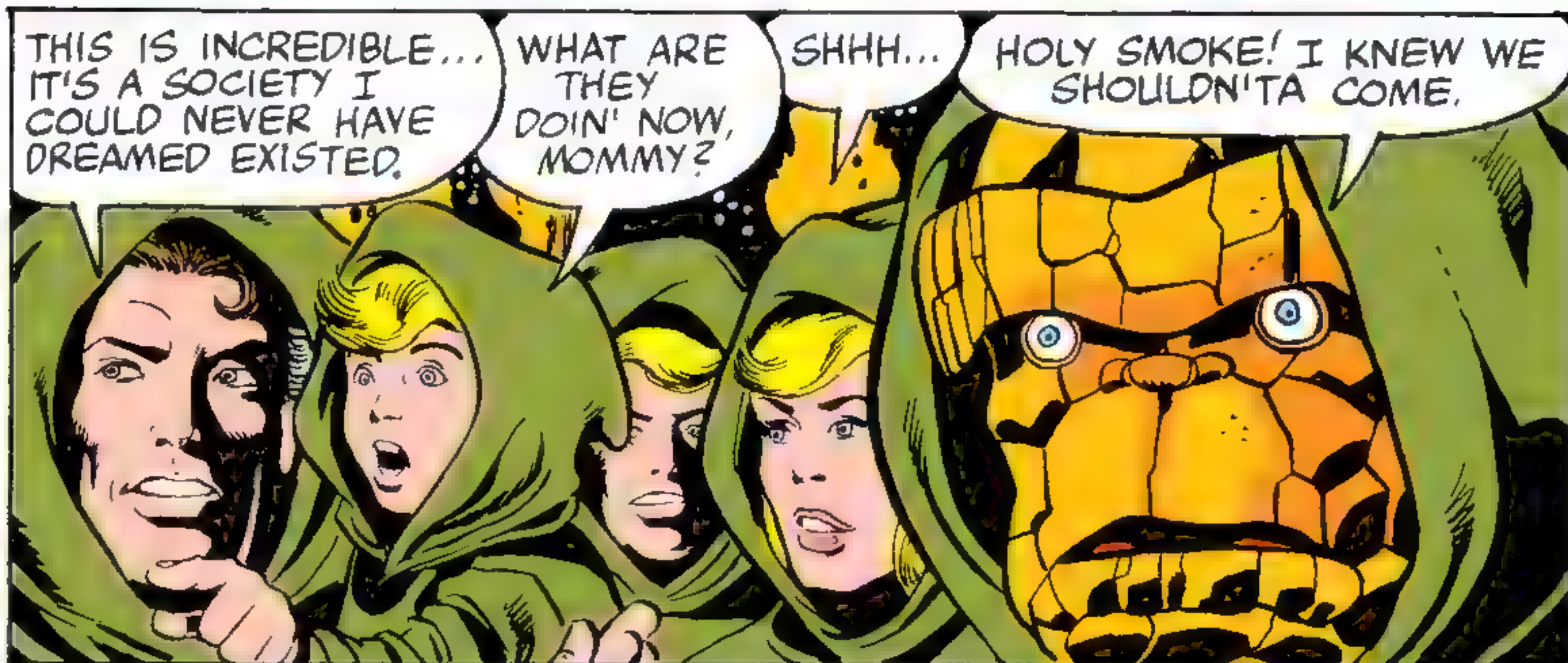


THIS IS INCREDIBLE... IT'S A SOCIETY I COULD NEVER HAVE DREAMED EXISTED.

WHAT ARE THEY DOIN' NOW, MOMMY?

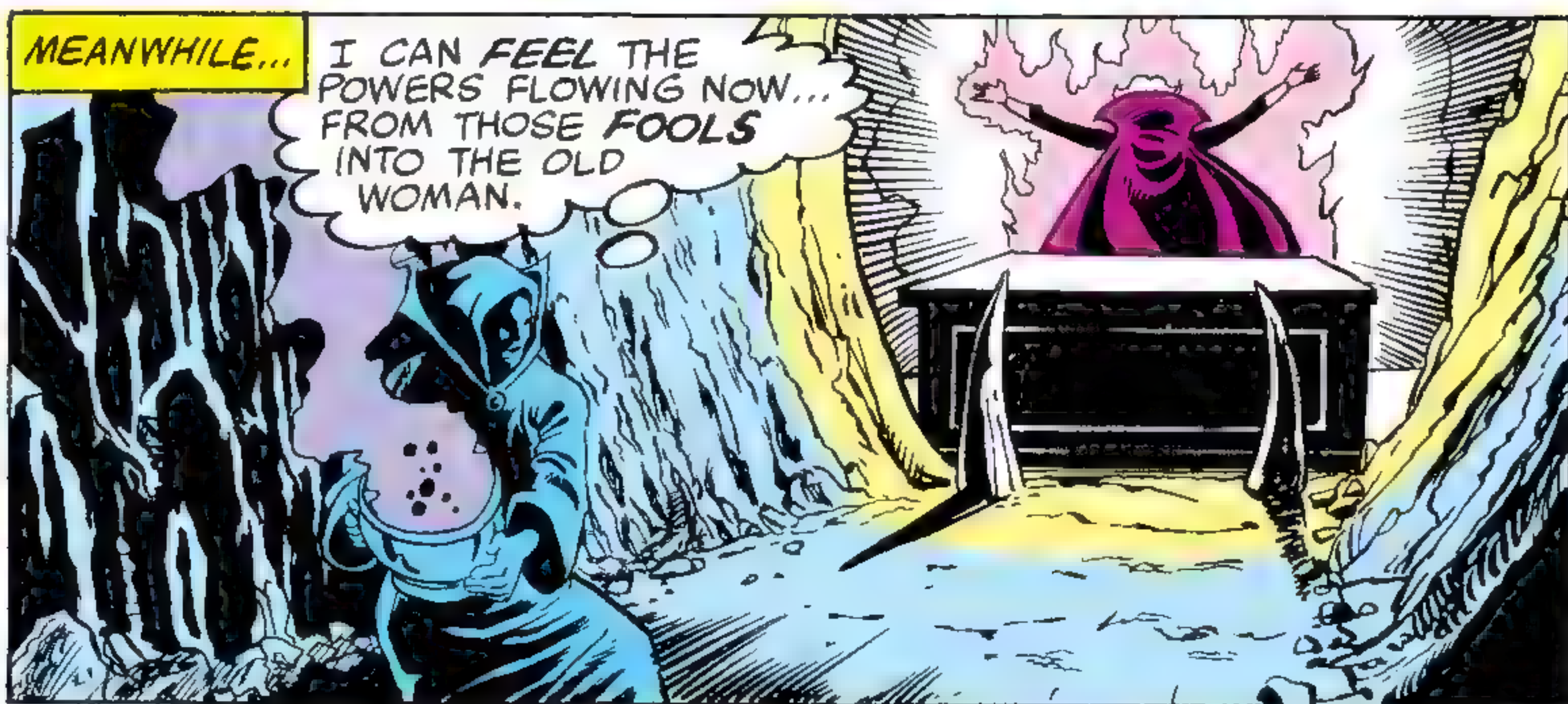
SHHH...

HOLY SMOKE! I KNEW WE SHOULDN'TA COME.



MEANWHILE...

I CAN FEEL THE POWERS FLOWING NOW... FROM THOSE **FOOLS** INTO THE OLD WOMAN.



THEY BECOME **ONE** WITH HER... THROUGH HER THEIR POWERS ARE **CLEANSED**!

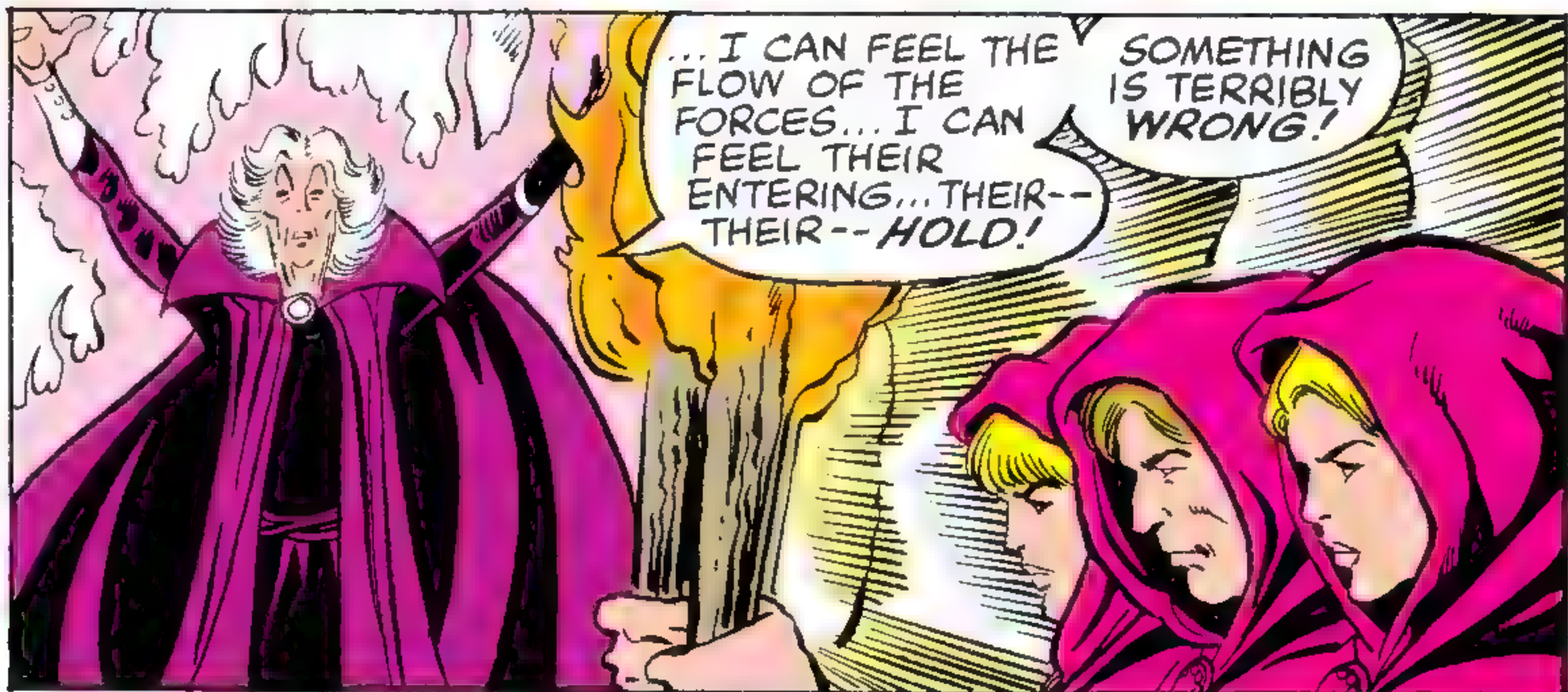
HOW IRONIC... WHEN SHE IS THE MOST POWERFUL... SHE WILL ALSO PROVE THE MOST **DEADLY**--

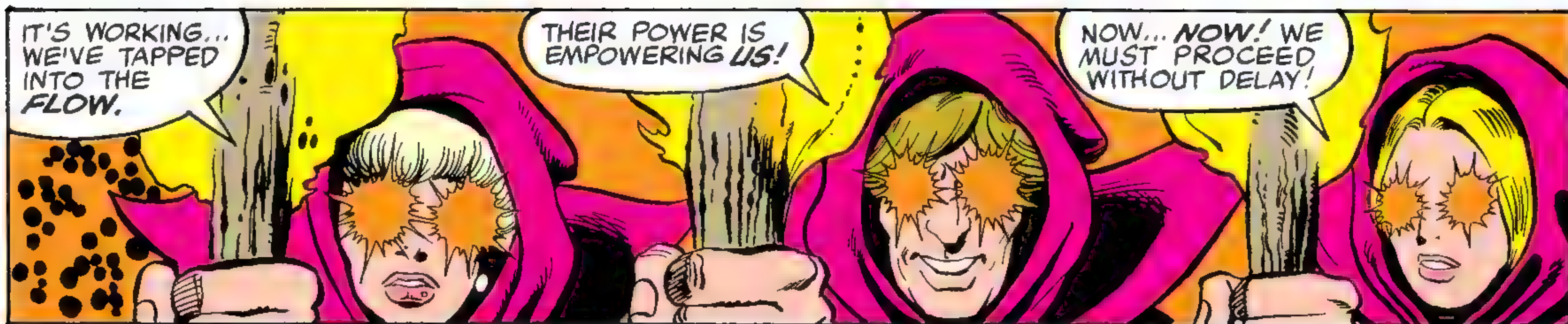
--TO THE WEAK FOOLS OF NEW SALEM... AND TO THE **REMAINDER** OF MANKIND!



... I CAN FEEL THE FLOW OF THE FORCES... I CAN FEEL THEIR ENTERING... THEIR-- **HOLD!**

SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY **WRONG!**

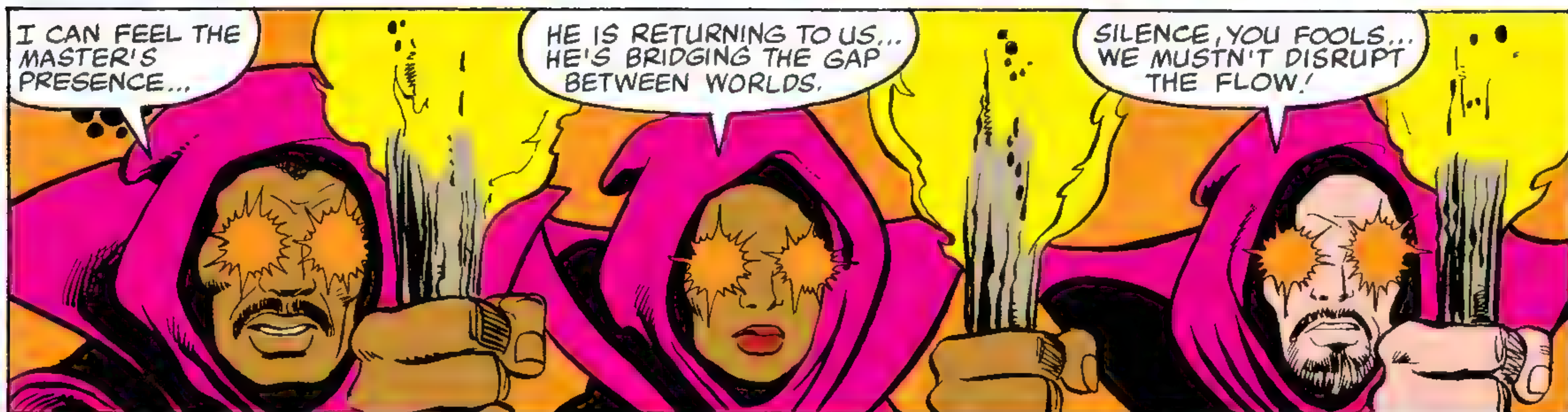




IT'S WORKING...
WE'VE TAPPED
INTO THE
FLOW.

THEIR POWER IS
EMPOWERING US!

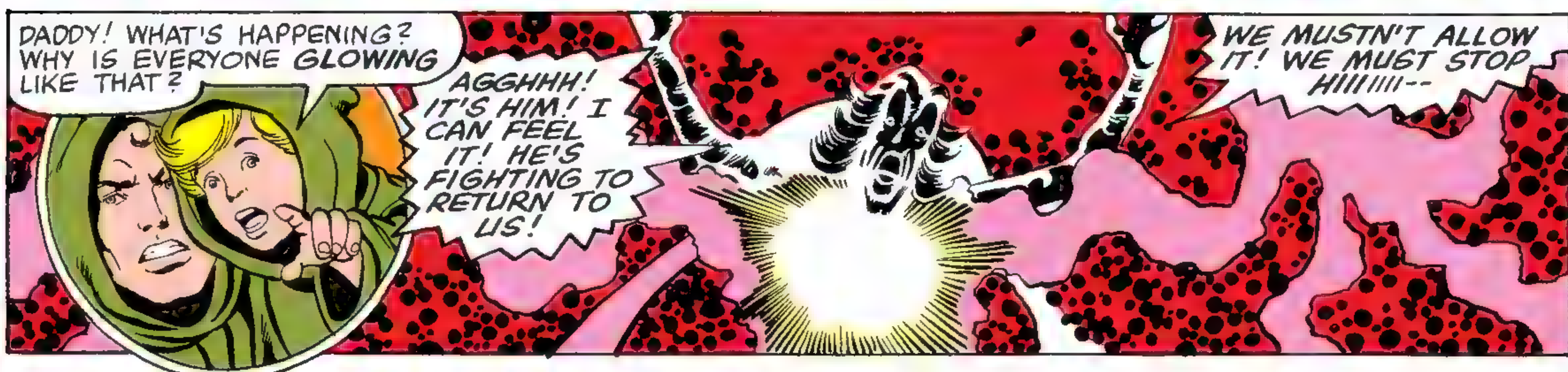
NOW... NOW! WE
MUST PROCEED
WITHOUT DELAY!



I CAN FEEL THE
MASTER'S
PRESENCE...

HE IS RETURNING TO US...
HE'S BRIDGING THE GAP
BETWEEN WORLDS.

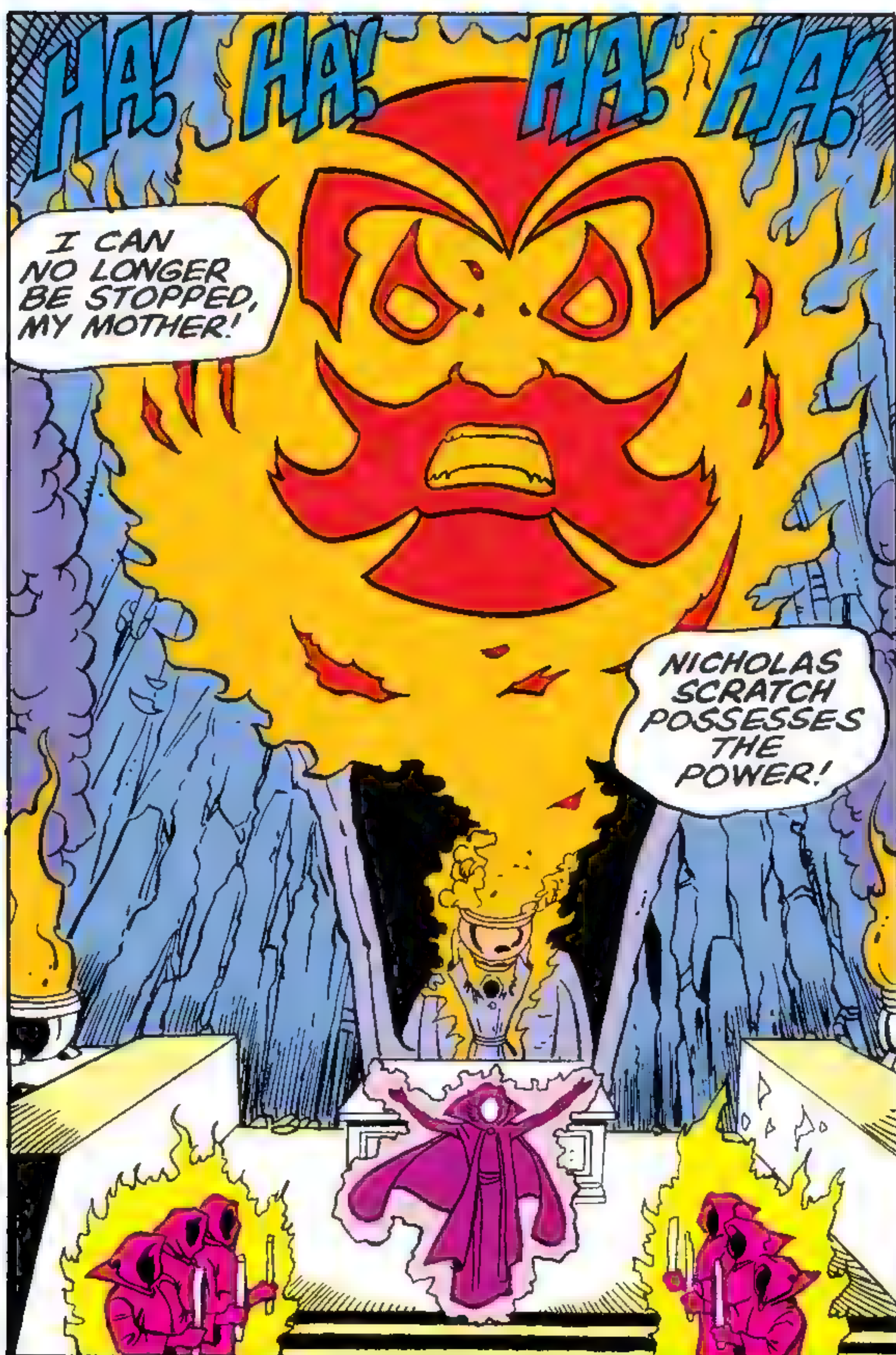
SILENCE, YOU FOOLS...
WE MUSTN'T DISRUPT
THE FLOW!



DADDY! WHAT'S HAPPENING?
WHY IS EVERYONE GLOWING
LIKE THAT?

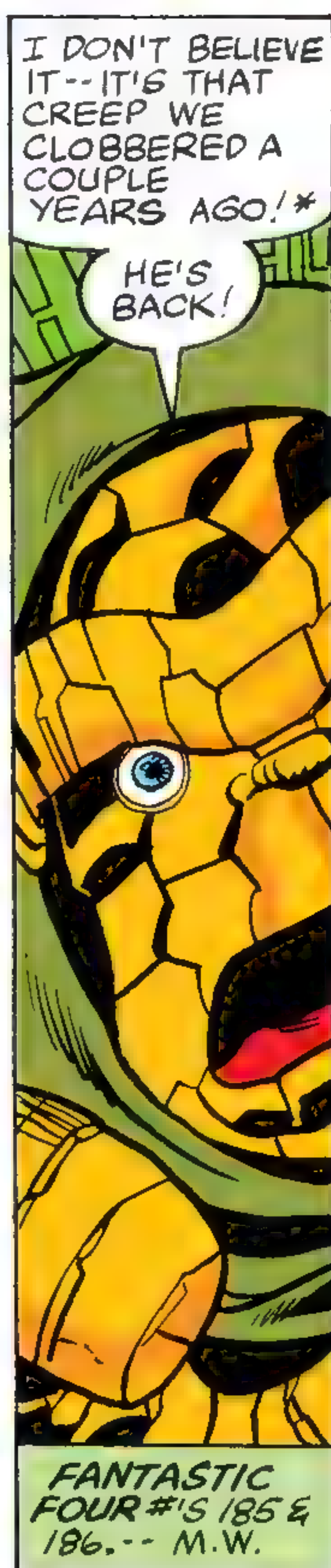
AGGHHH!
IT'S HIM! I
CAN FEEL
IT! HE'S
FIGHTING TO
RETURN TO
US!

WE MUSTN'T ALLOW
IT! WE MUST STOP
HIIIIII--



I CAN
NO LONGER
BE STOPPED,
MY MOTHER!

NICHOLAS
SCRATCH
POSSESSES
THE
POWER!



I DON'T BELIEVE
IT--IT'S THAT
CREEP WE
CLOBBED A
COUPLE
YEARS AGO! *

HE'S
BACK!

FANTASTIC
FOUR #'S 185 &
186.-- M.W.

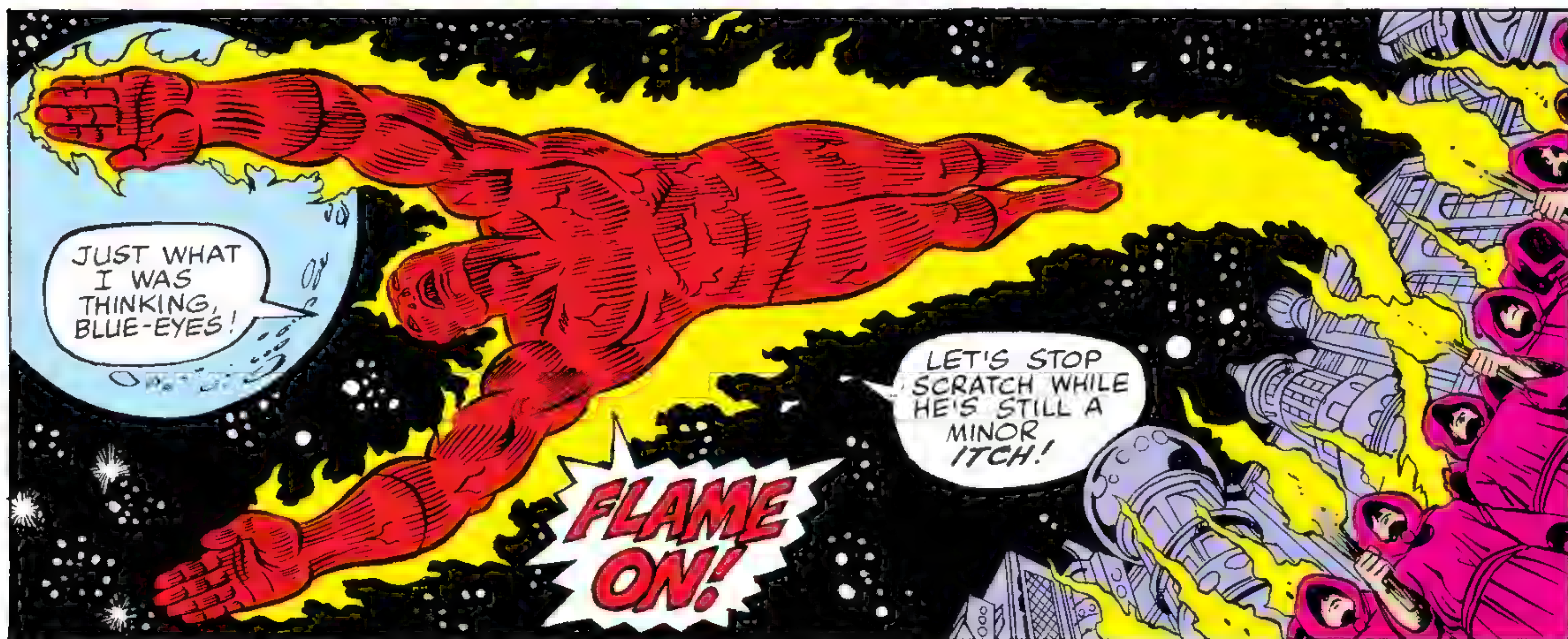
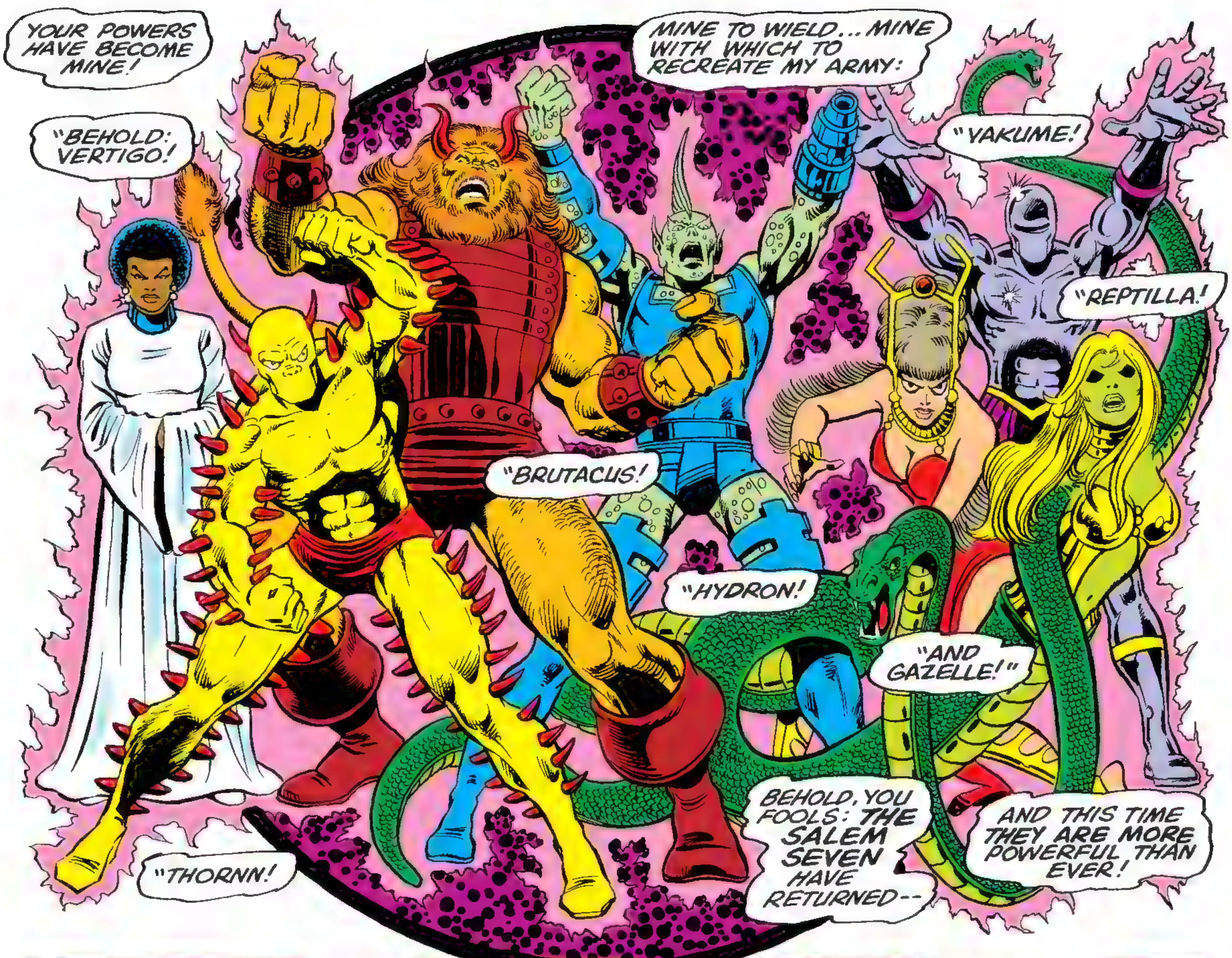


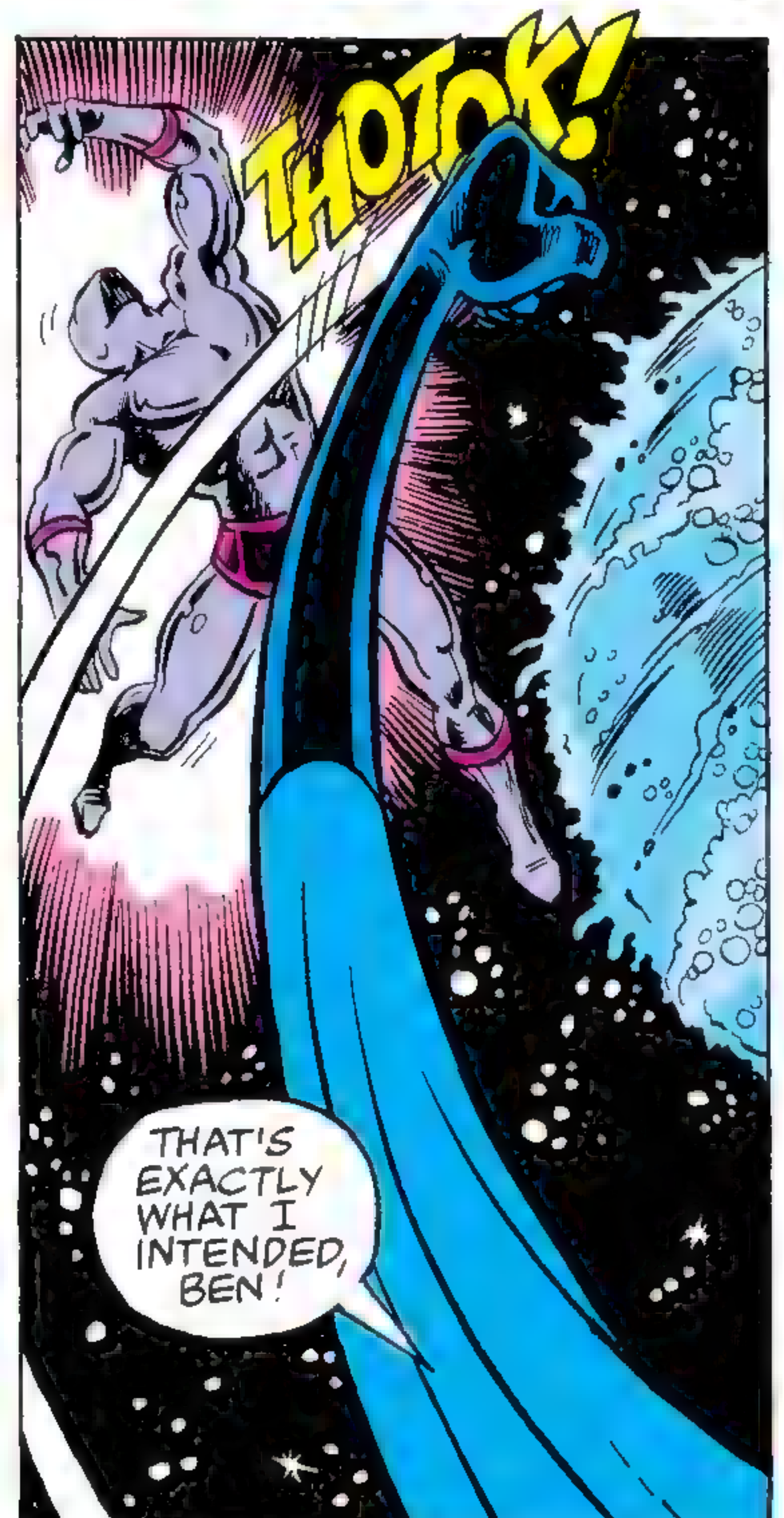
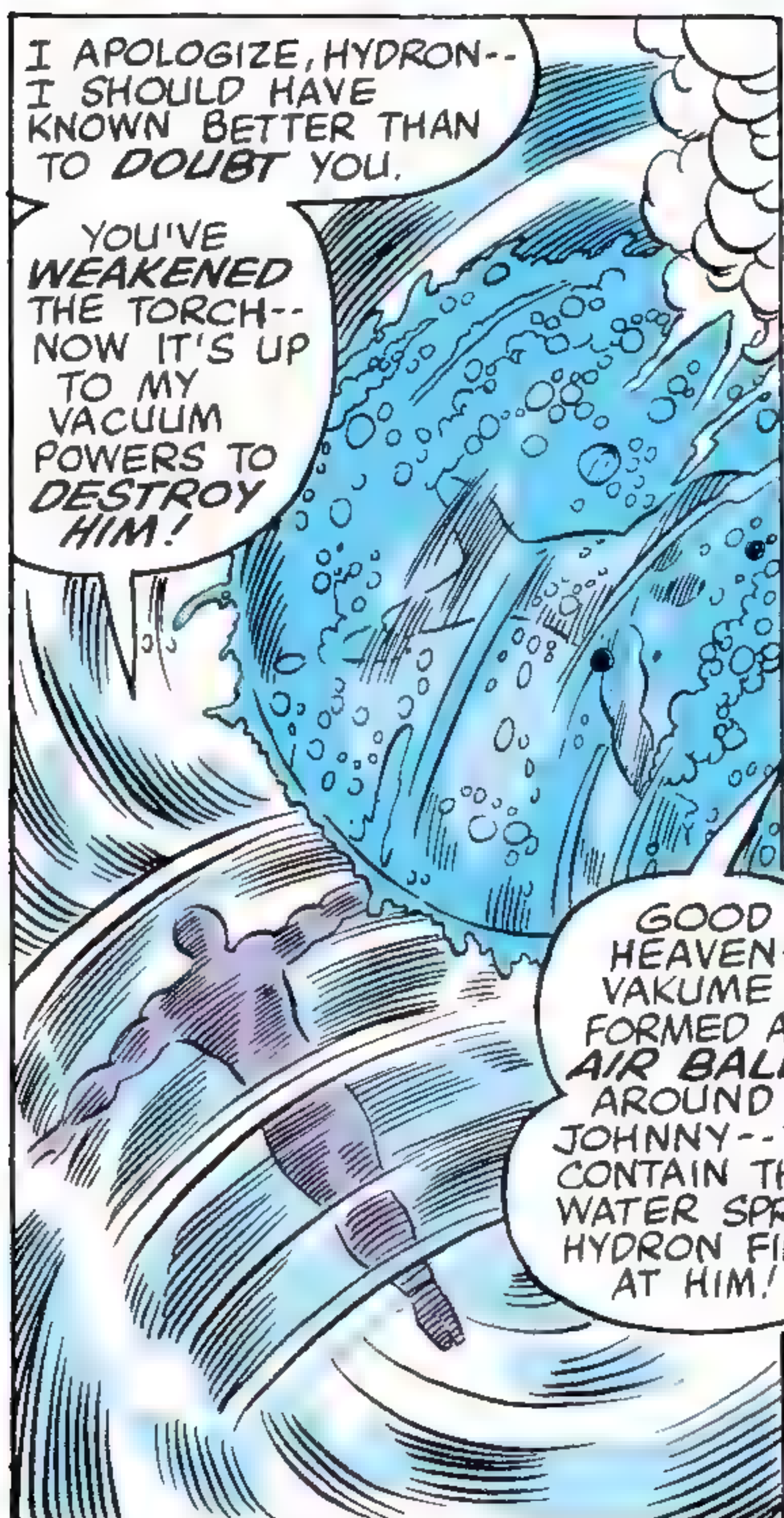
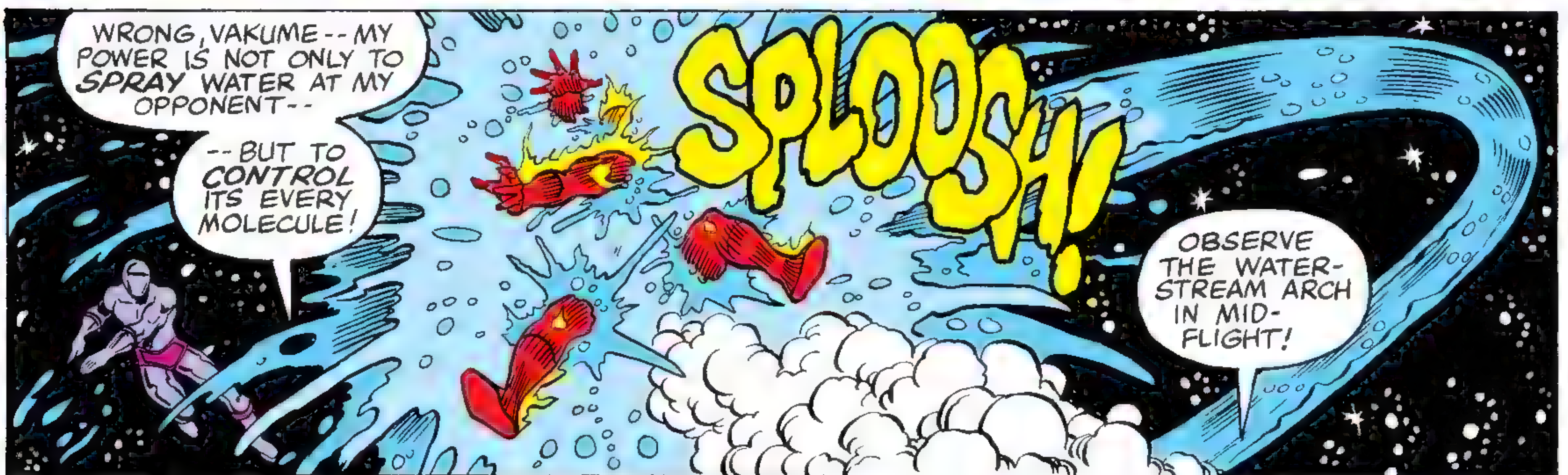
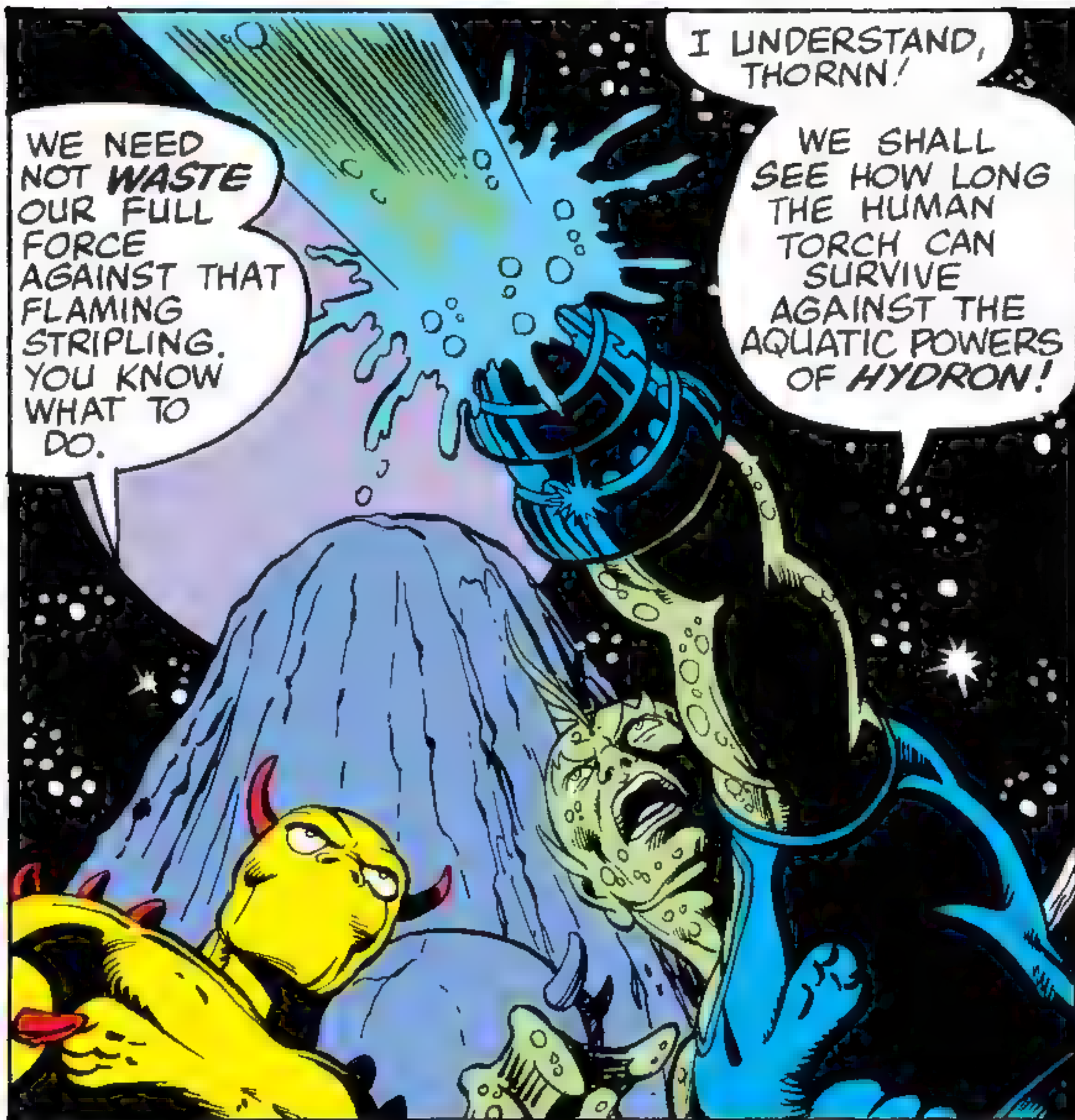
I HAVE DONE MORE THAN
MERELY RETURN, YOU
MUTATED FOOL! I HAVE
RETURNED WITH VEN-
GEANCE AS MY GOAL!

I WHO POSSESS THE
POWER WILL NO LONGER
HIDE IN FEAR OF
HUMANKIND!

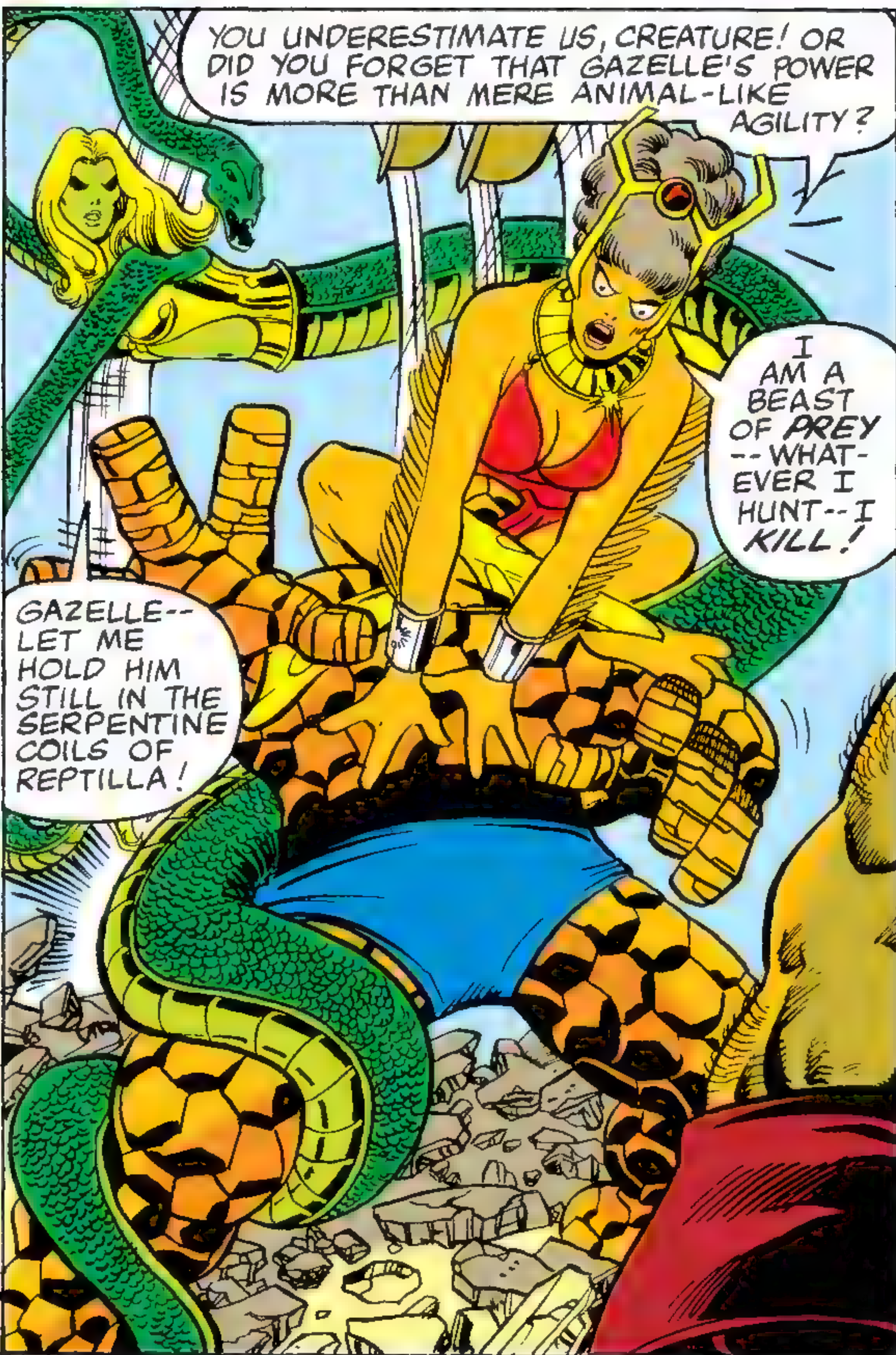
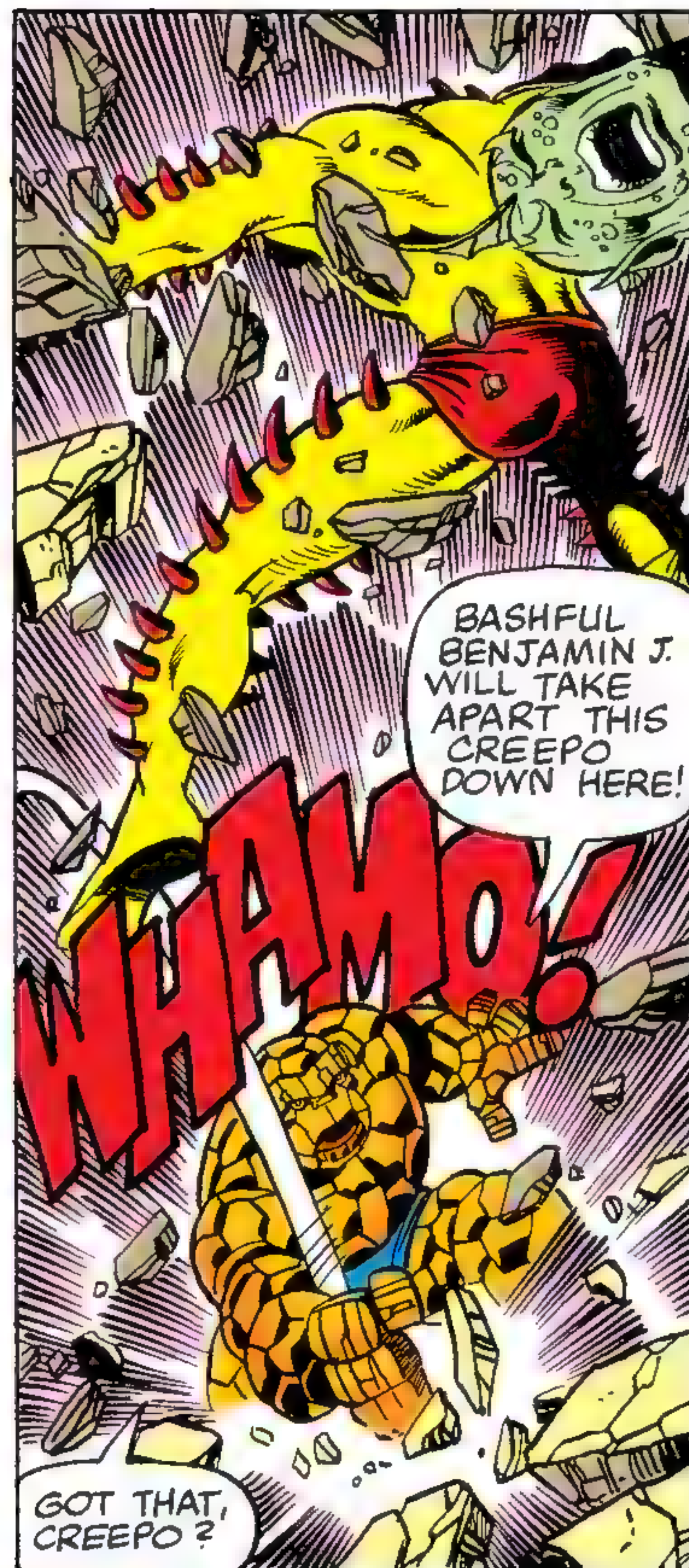
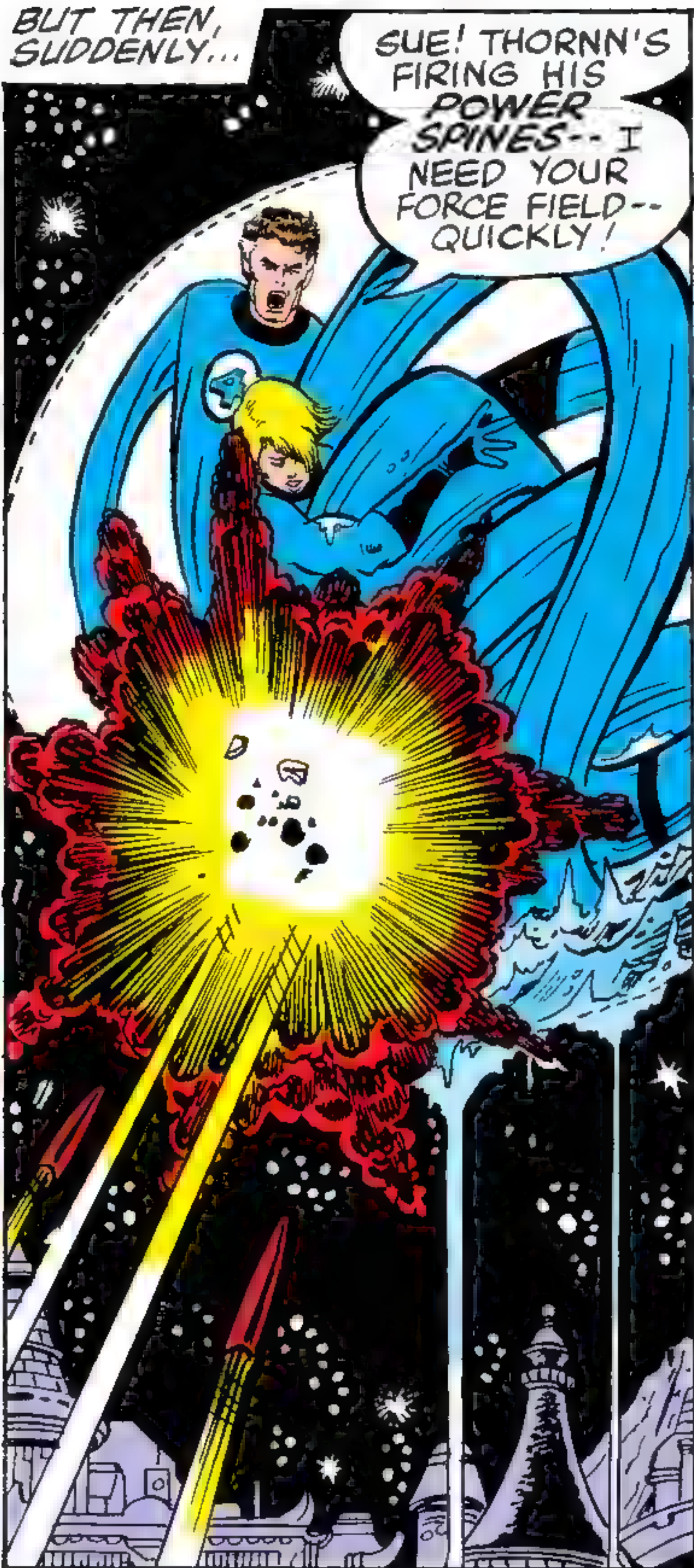
WE WILL
DESTROY
ALL THOSE
WHO ARE
WEAKER
THAN WE!

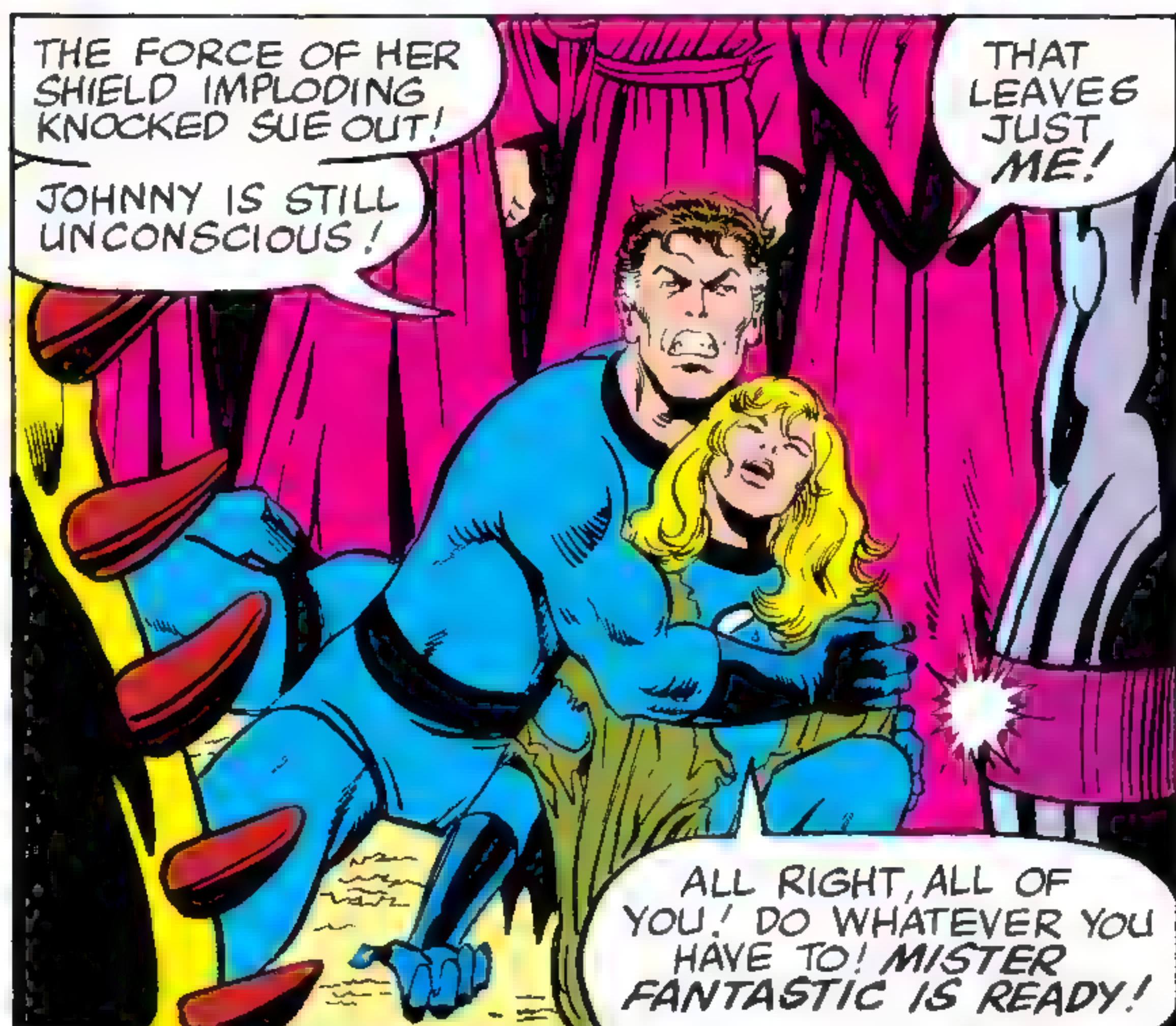
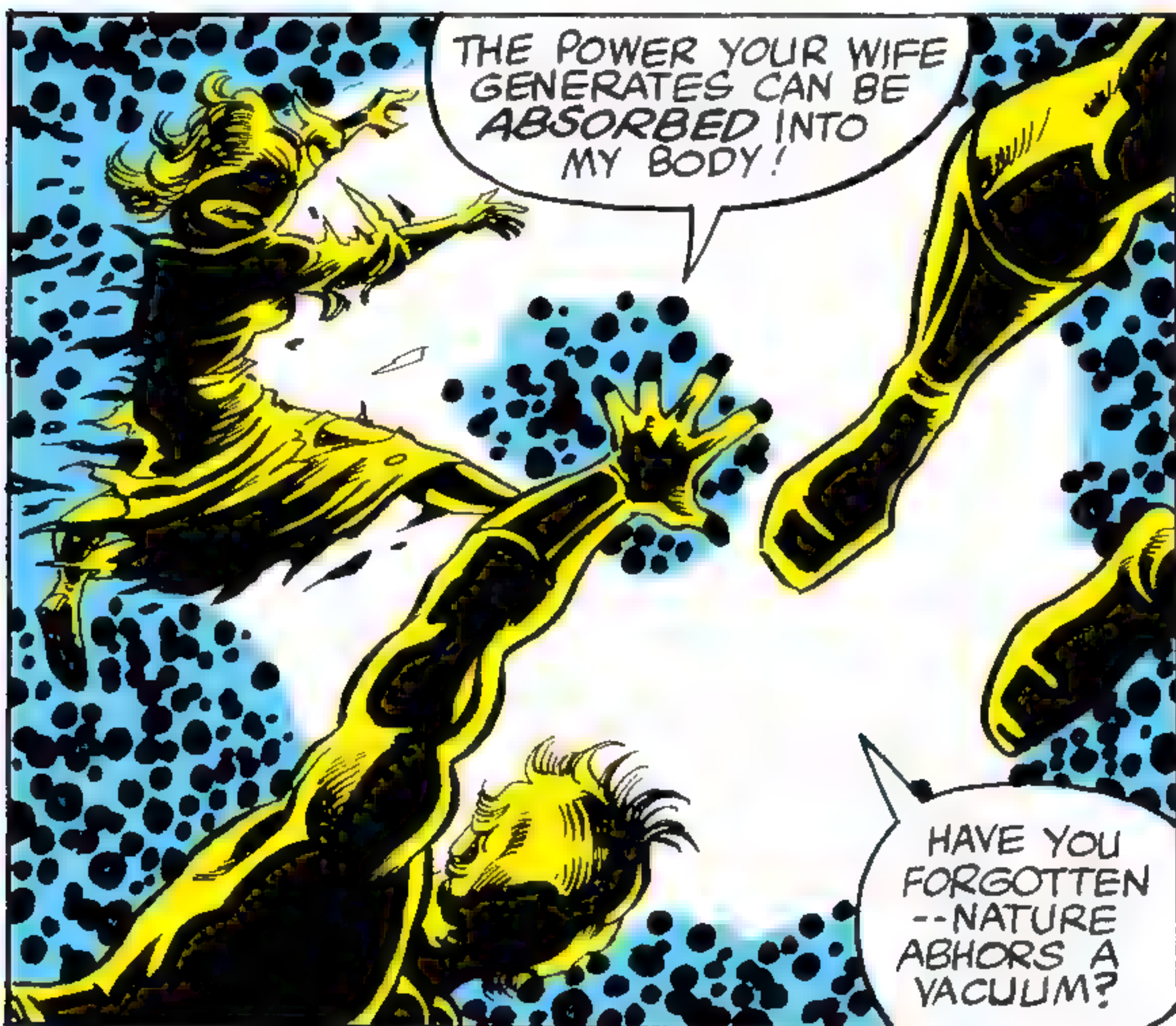
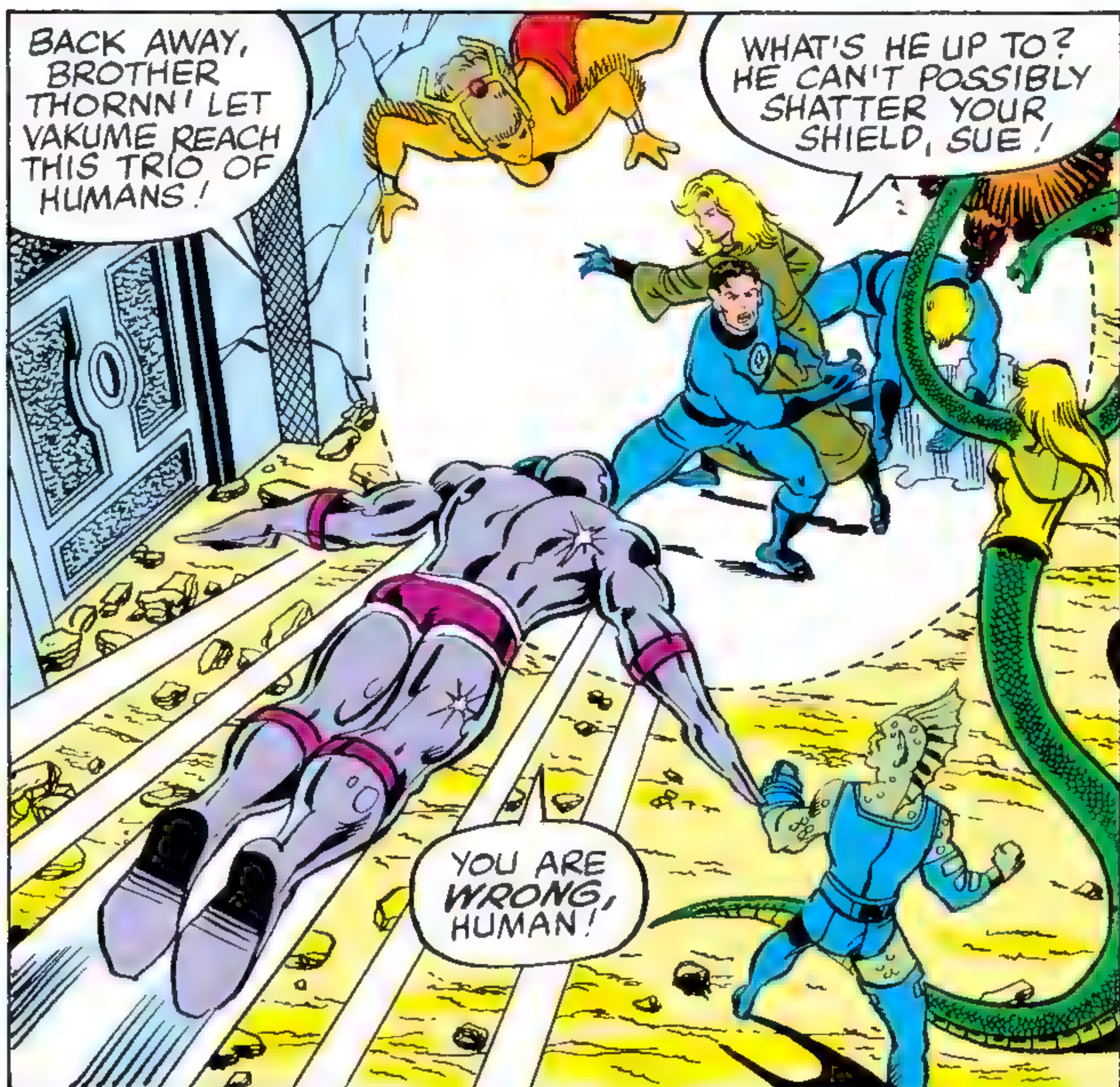
WE WILL
DESTROY...
THEN WE
SHALL
RULE!

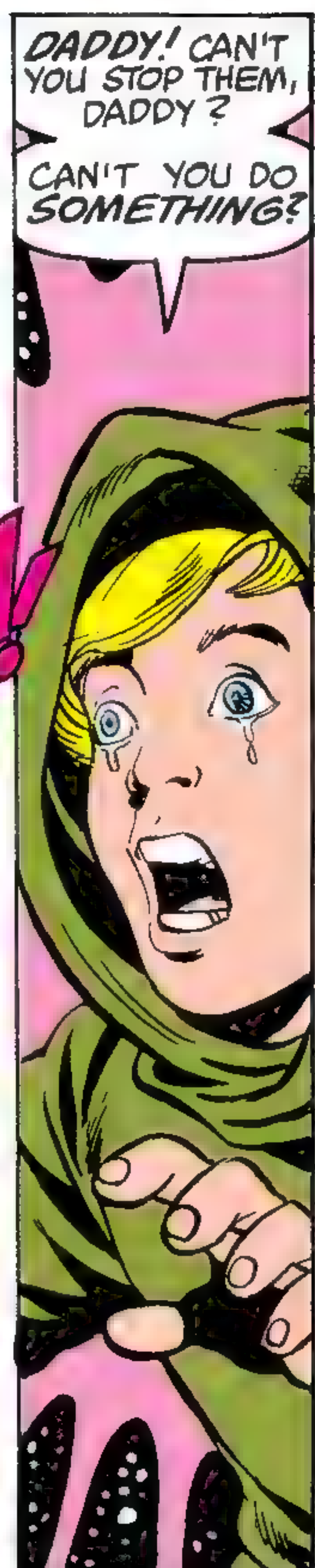
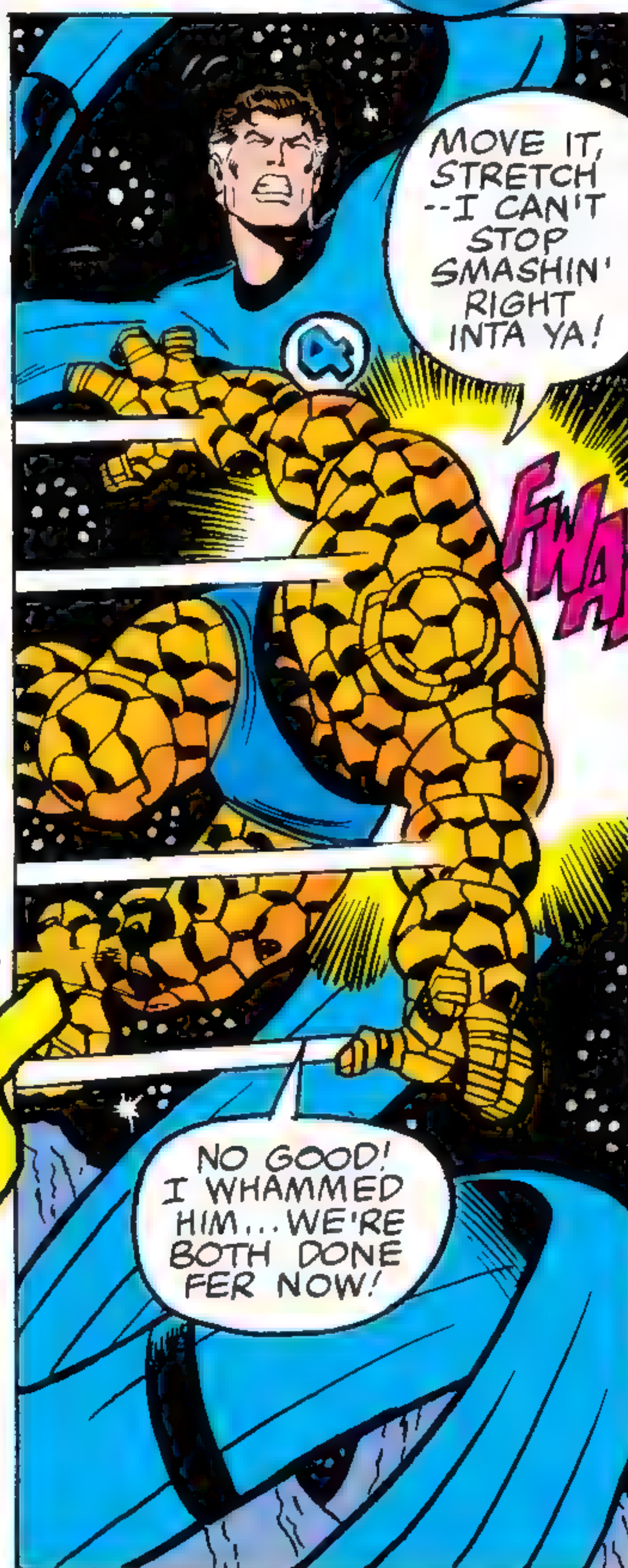
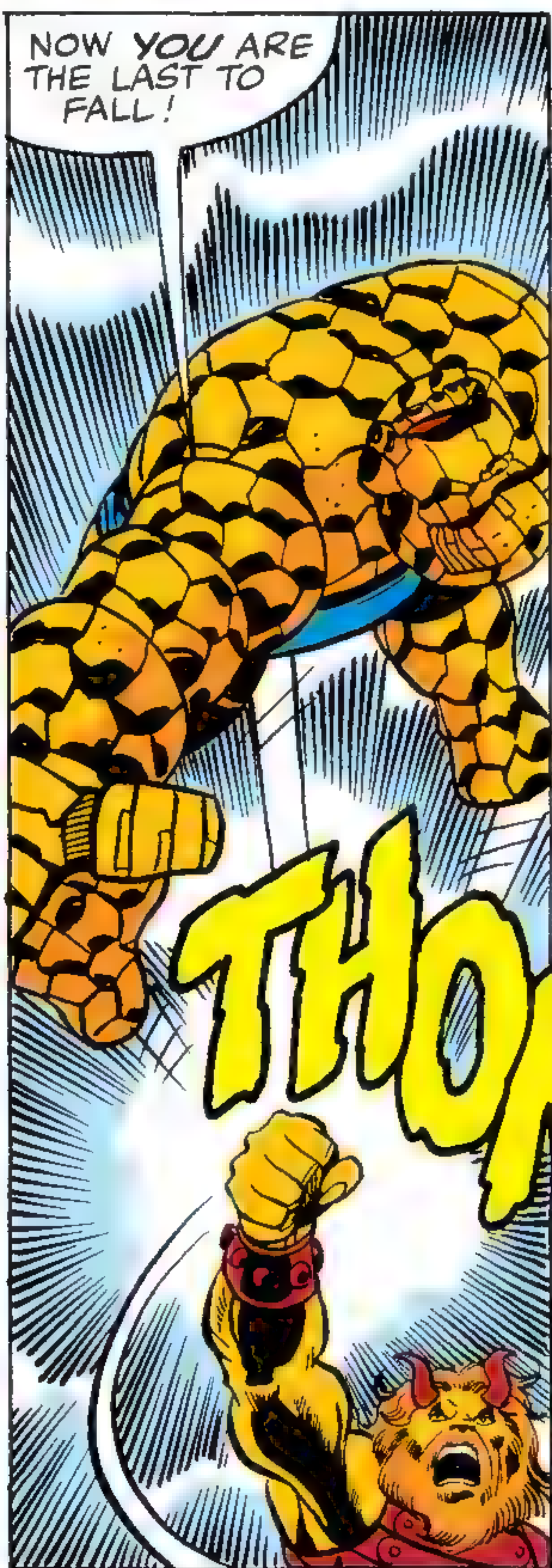
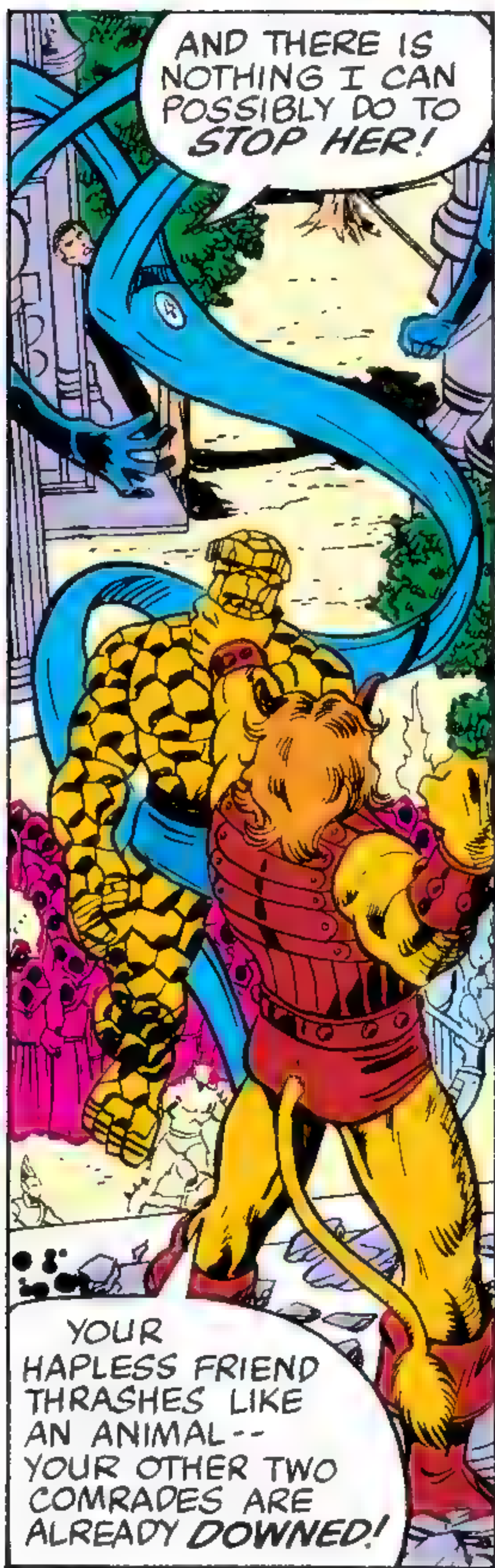
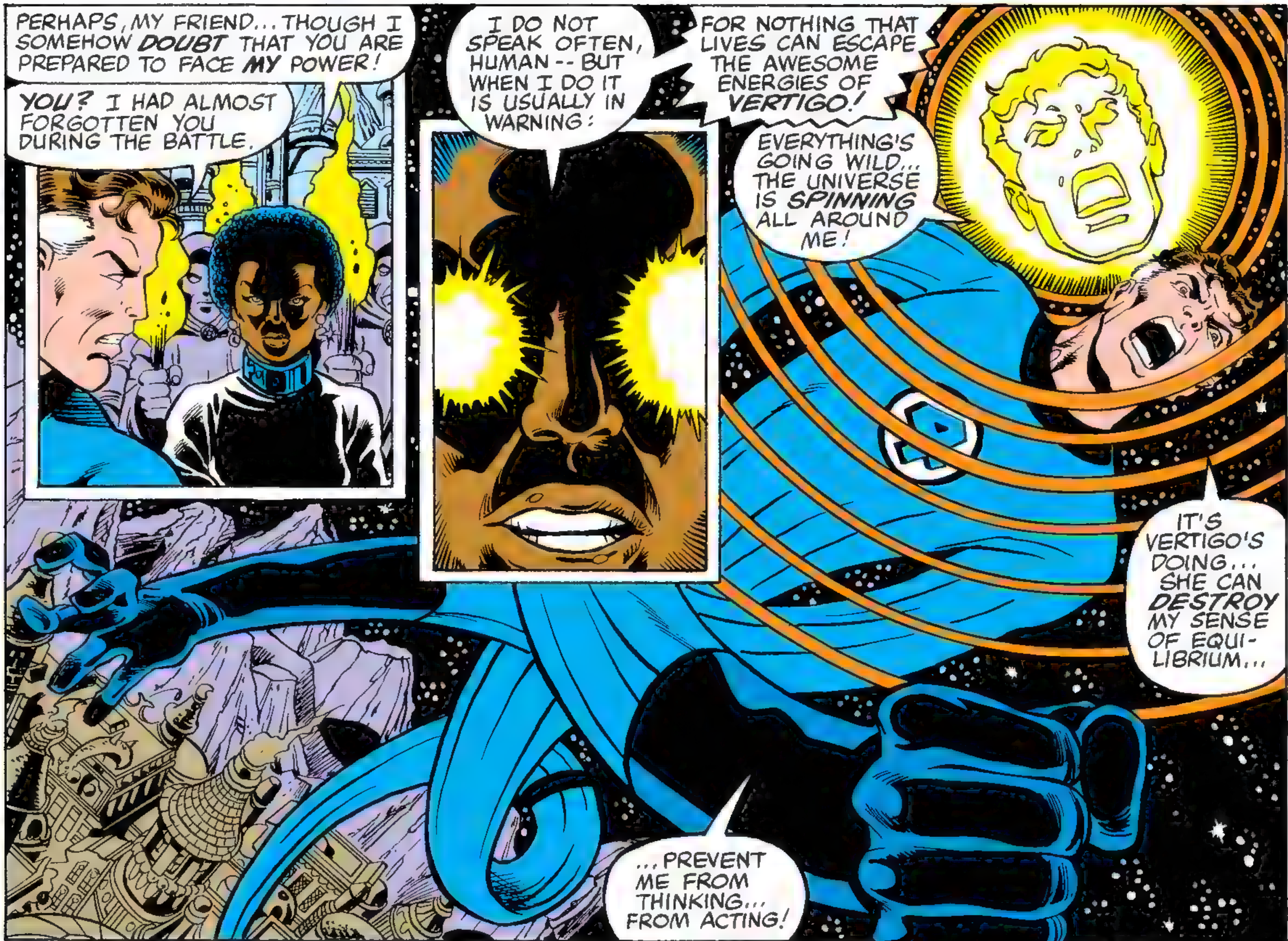


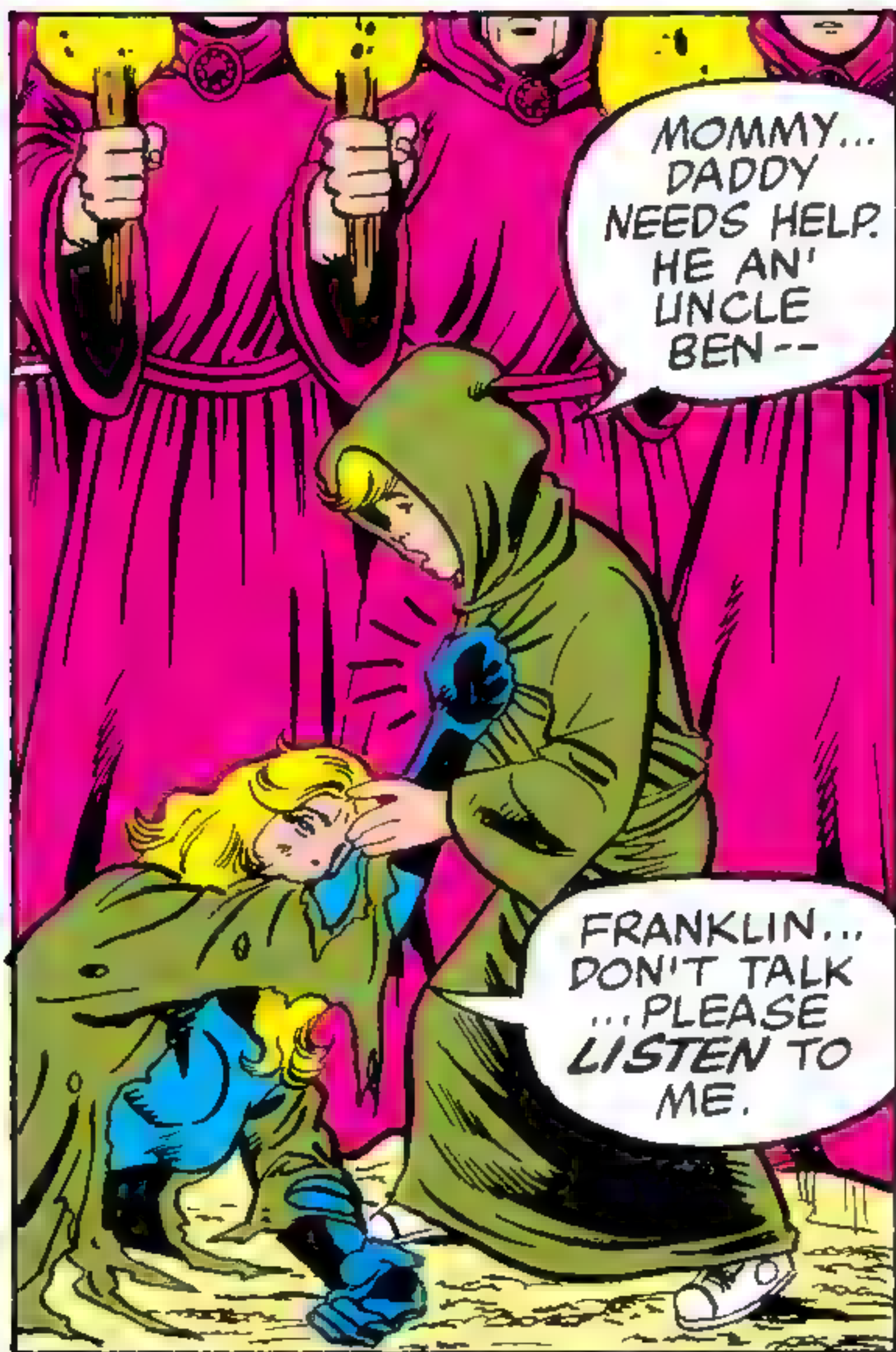


BUT THEN,
SUDDENLY...









MOMMY...
DADDY
NEEDS HELP.
HE AN'
UNCLE
BEN--

FRANKLIN...
DON'T TALK
...PLEASE
LISTEN TO
ME.



YOU'VE GOT TO **SAVE**
YOURSELF. RUN INTO THE
DESERT-- **HIDE!**

DON'T LET
THEM **GET**
YOU!



LOOK! THE HUMAN
CHILD STILL LIVES!
WE MUST **CATCH**
HIM BEFORE HE
ESCAPES!



NO, REPTILLA... HE IS MERELY A CHILD WHO
CAN PROVE NO THREAT TO US!

MEANWHILE
OUR PLANS
MUST
CONTINUE.



WE MUST **COMPLETE**
THE SPELL WITH WHICH
TO RETURN NICHOLAS
SCRATCH TO OUR
REALM.

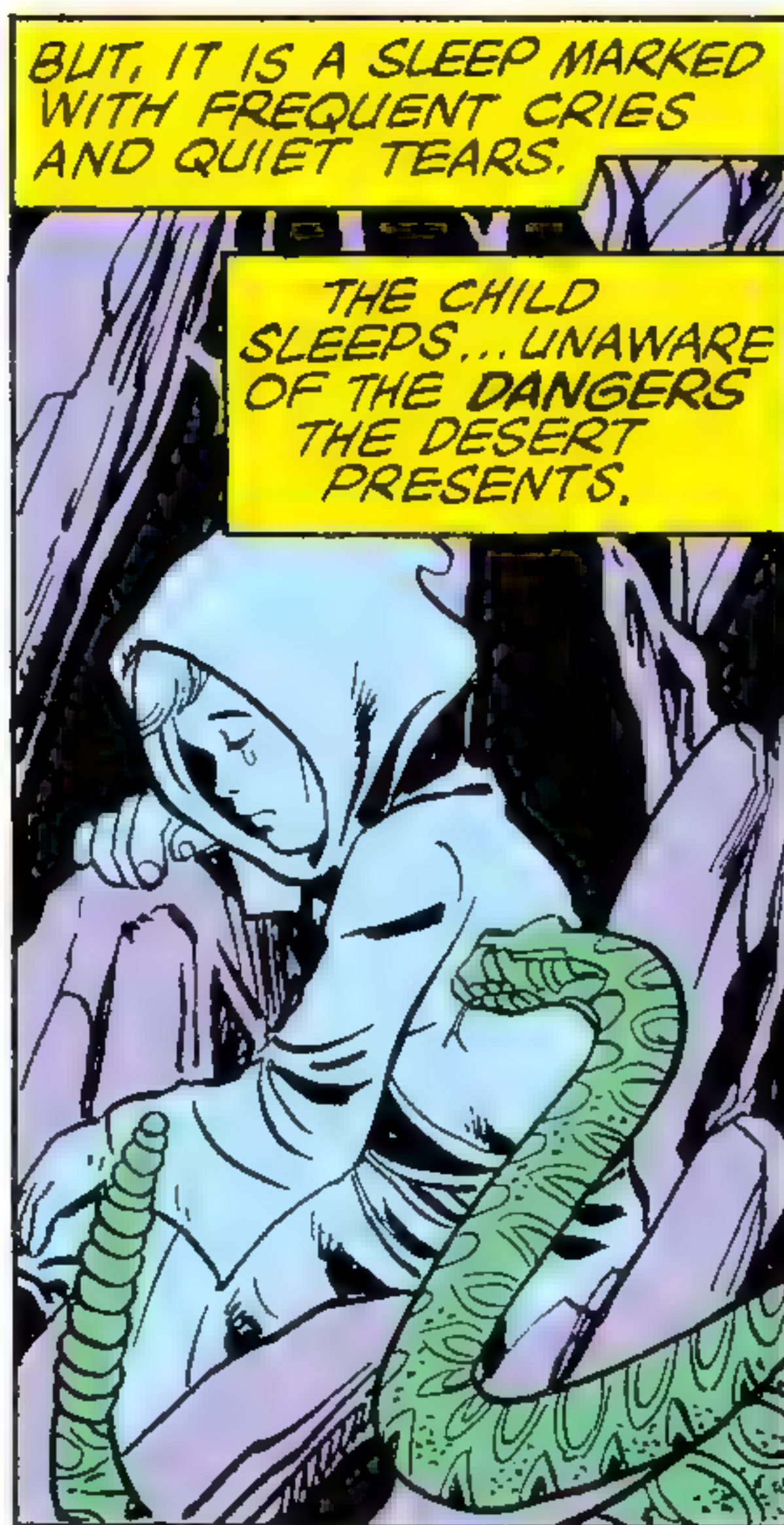
THE SEVEN JOIN HANDS AS A GREAT SPHERE OF LIGHT
ENVELOPS THEM...

...LIFTS OFF THE GROUND--
THEN SOARS ABOVE NEW
SALEM...

...AND OFF
INTO THE
GATHERING
DARKNESS...



IT IS A WARM NIGHT...
ONE WHICH LULLS A
BONE-WEARY FRANKLIN
RICHARDS INTO A DEEP,
HEAVY SLEEP.

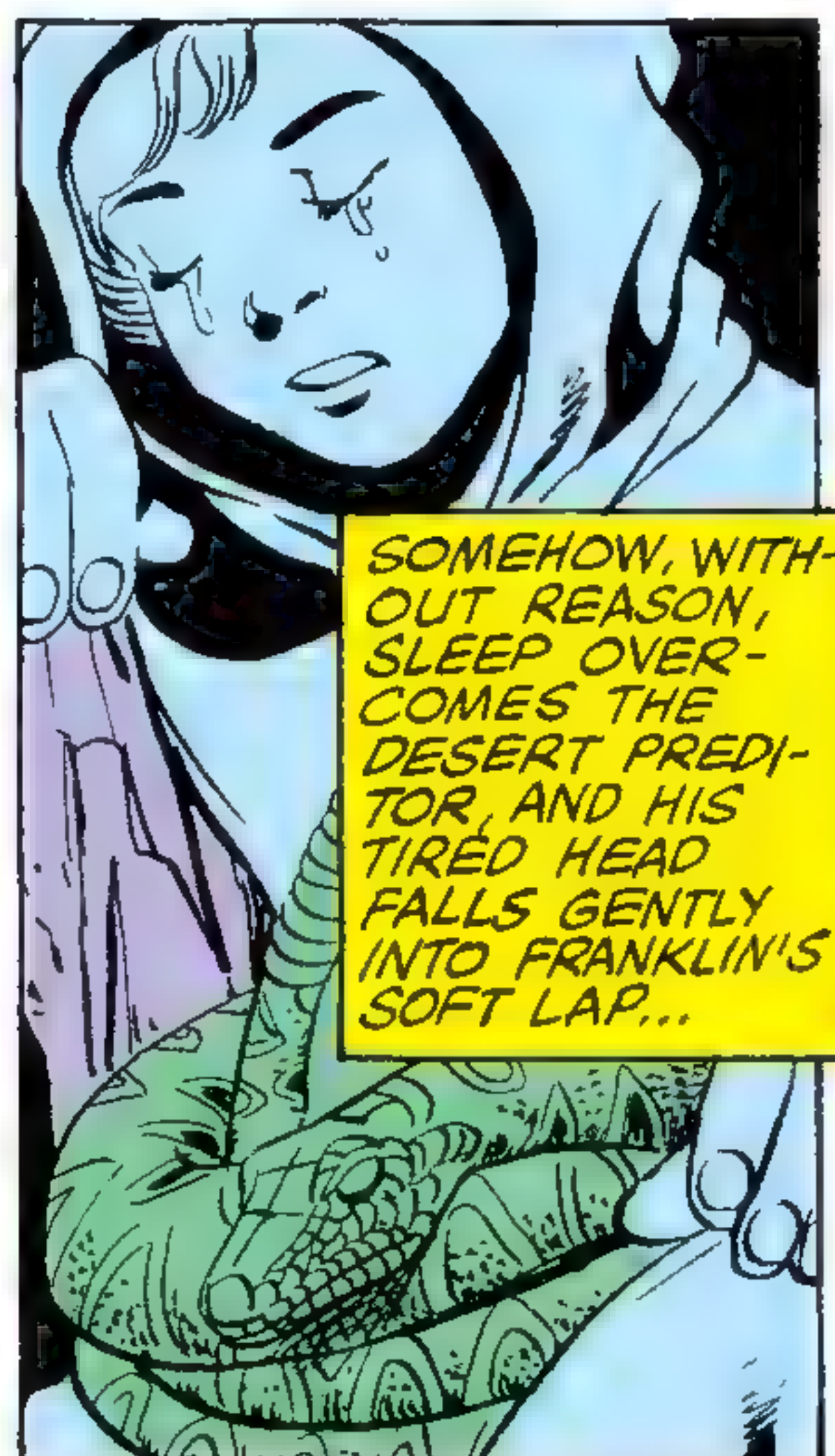


BUT, IT IS A SLEEP MARKED
WITH FREQUENT CRIES
AND QUIET TEARS.

THE CHILD
SLEEPS... UNAWARE
OF THE DANGERS
THE DESERT
PRESENTS.



SLITHERING VICIOUSLY
TOWARD YOUNG
FRANKLIN RICHARDS,
THE RATTLER PAUSES.
HIS VICTIM WILL DIE
SWIFT... SWIF...

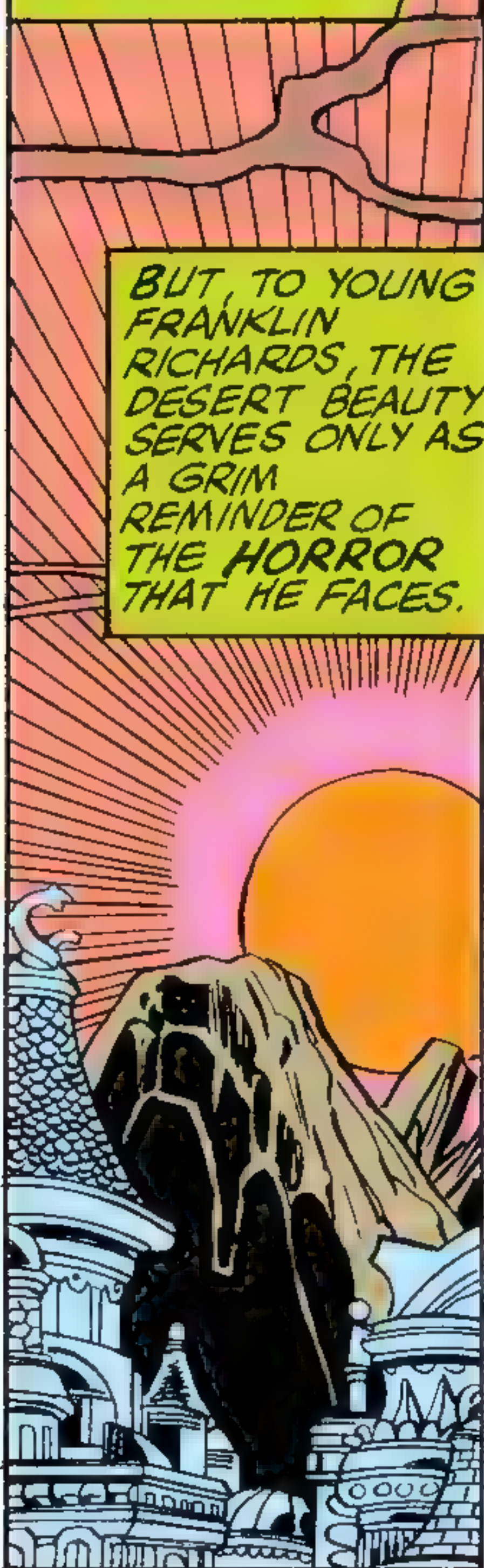


SOMEHOW, WITH-
OUT REASON,
SLEEP OVER-
COMES THE
DESERT PREDI-
TOR, AND HIS
TIRED HEAD
FALLS GENTLY
INTO FRANKLIN'S
SOFT LAP...

TOGETHER, THE TWO
PEACEFULLY SLEEP AWAY
THE NIGHT.

MORNING IN NEW SALEM: A GREAT GOLDEN BALL RISES SLOWLY IN THE EAST AS DAWN STREAKS THE AZURE SKIES...

BUT TO YOUNG FRANKLIN RICHARDS, THE DESERT BEAUTY SERVES ONLY AS A GRIM REMINDER OF THE HORROR THAT HE FACES.



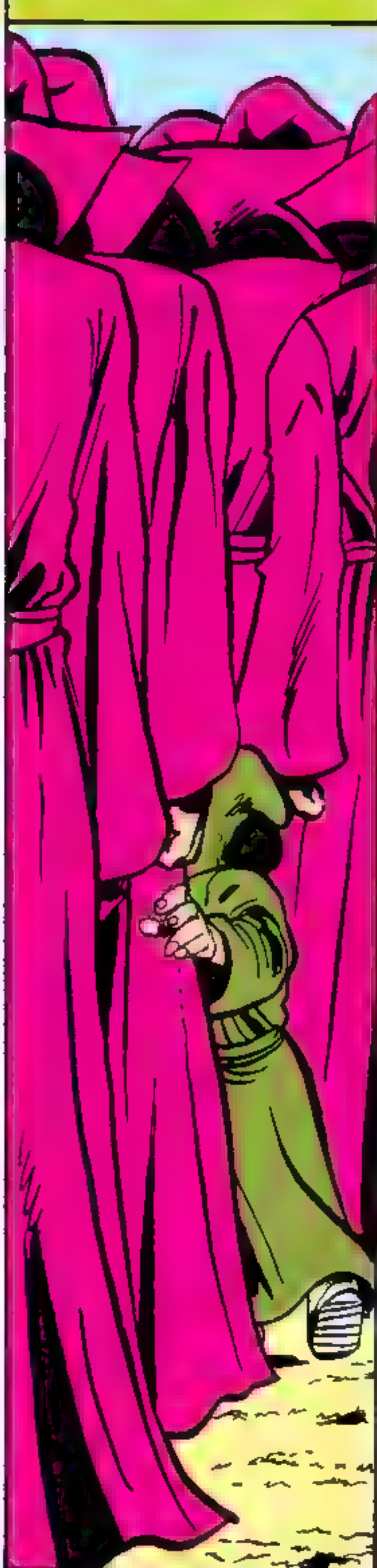
STANDING STIFF BEFORE HIM IS A SEEMINGLY END-LESS SEA OF ROBED WITCHES.



THEIR SILENCE FRIGHTENS THE BRAVE YOUNGSTER, BUT STILL HE WALKS ONWARD.



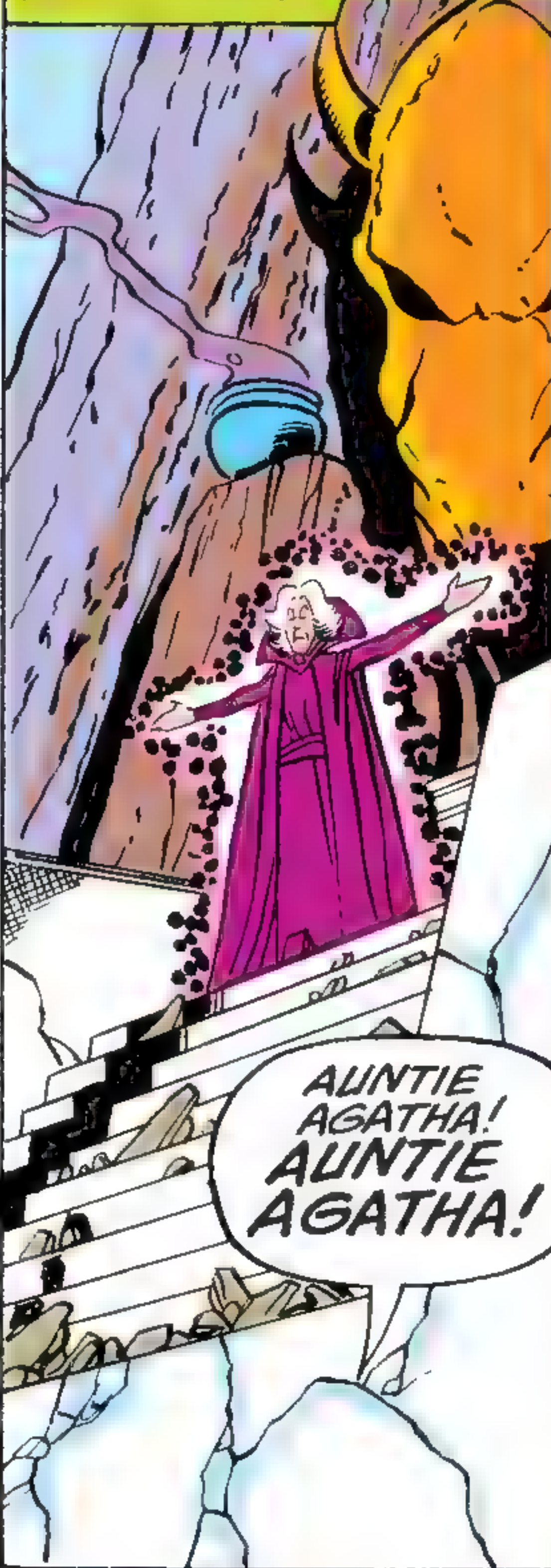
HE HAS HEARD HIS PARENTS' STORIES OFTEN IN THE PAST.



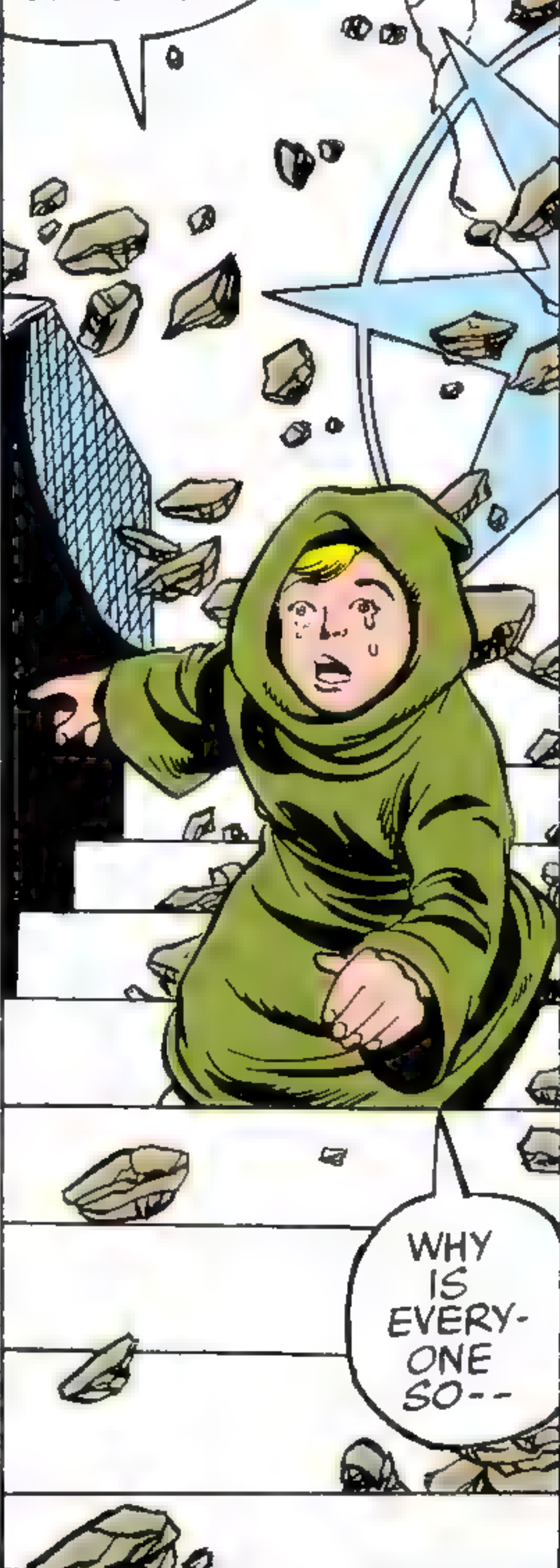
HE KNOWS THERE MUST BE A REASON THESE PEOPLE ARE STIFF LIKE MANNEQUINS IN A STORE WINDOW.



BUT STILL, THEY DO FRIGHTEN HIM... BUT NOT AS MUCH AS WHAT HE NEXT SPIES...



I NEED YOU, AUNTIE AGATHA! WHERE ARE MOMMY AND DADDY?



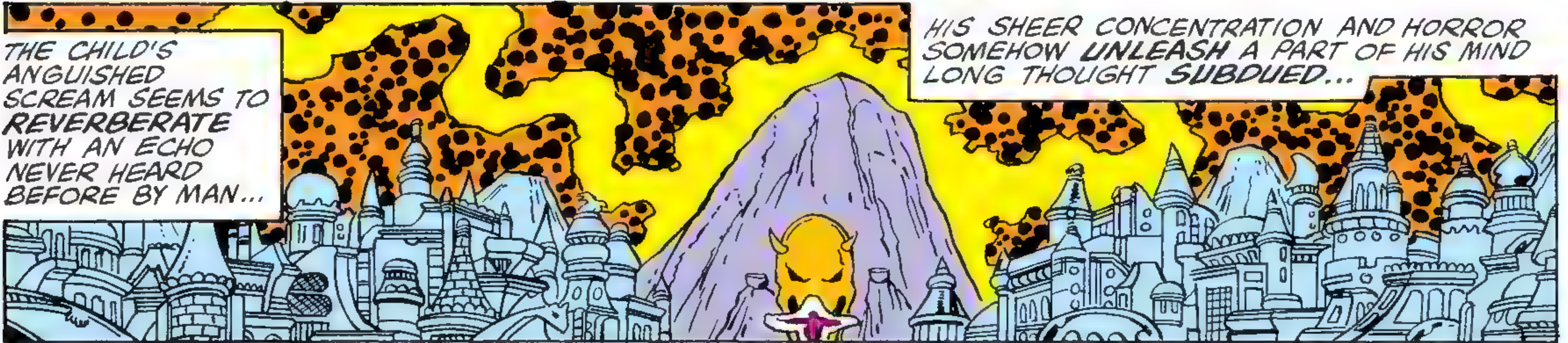
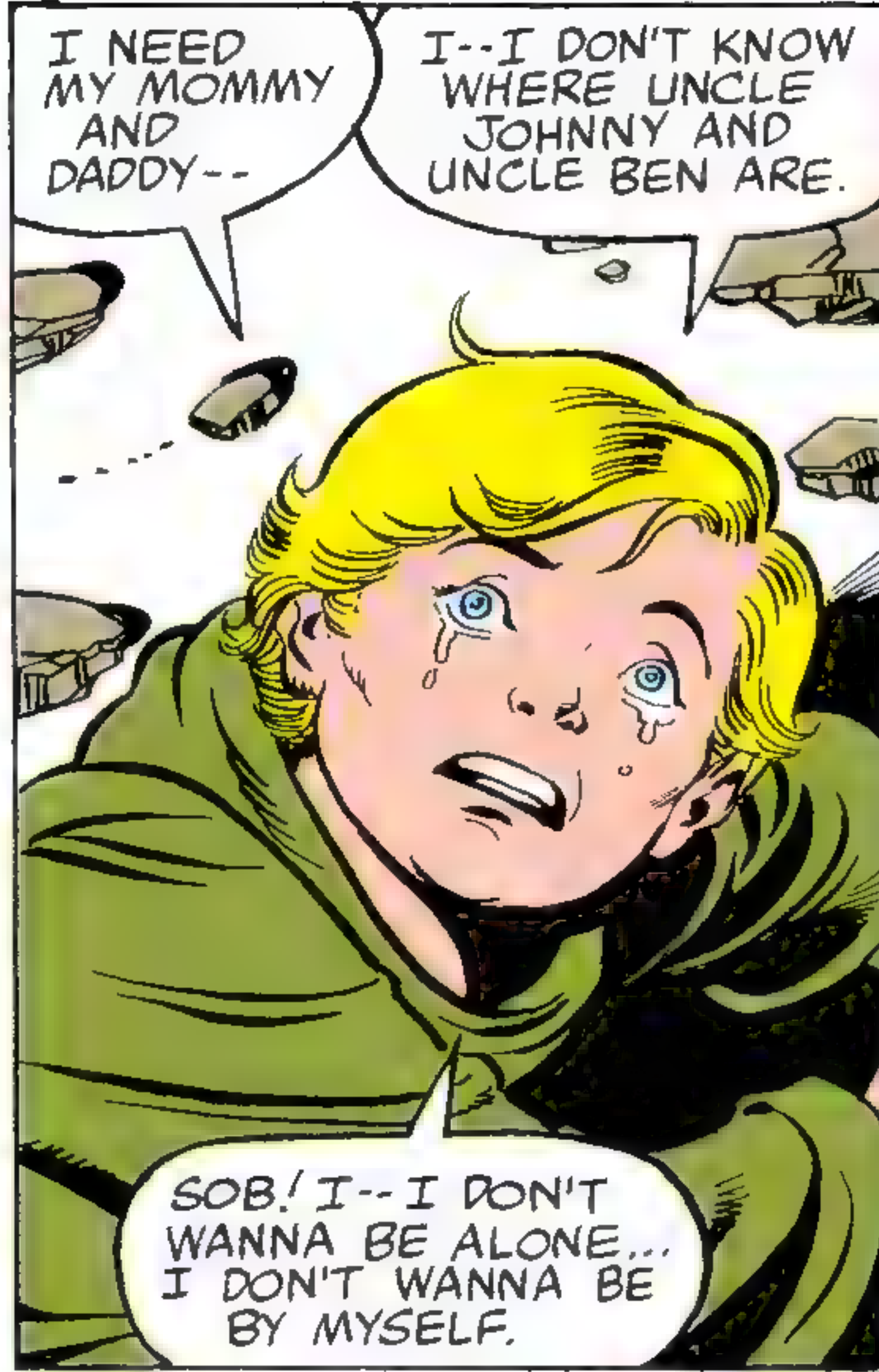
WHY IS EVERYONE SO--

AUNTIE AGATHA? WHAT'S--

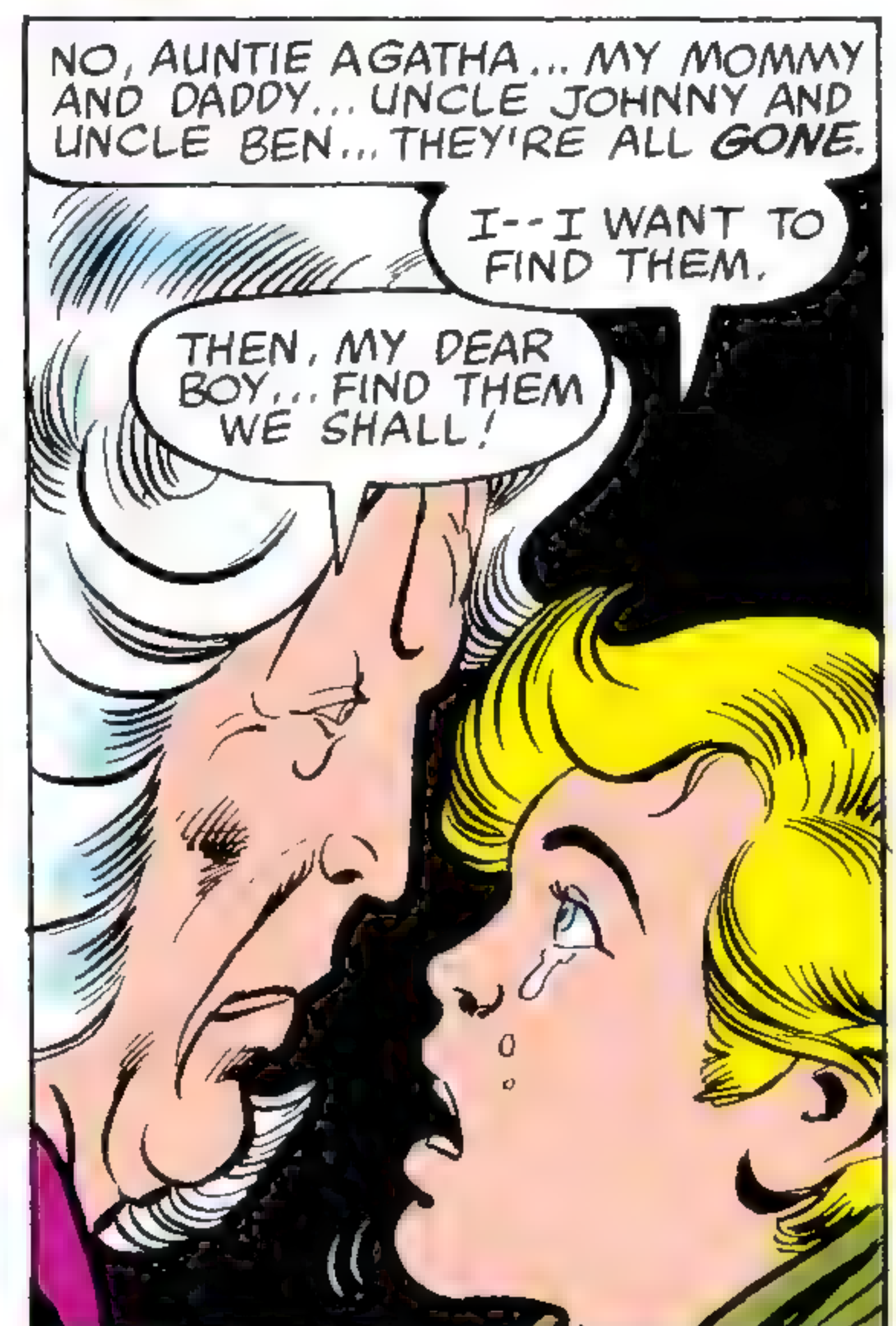
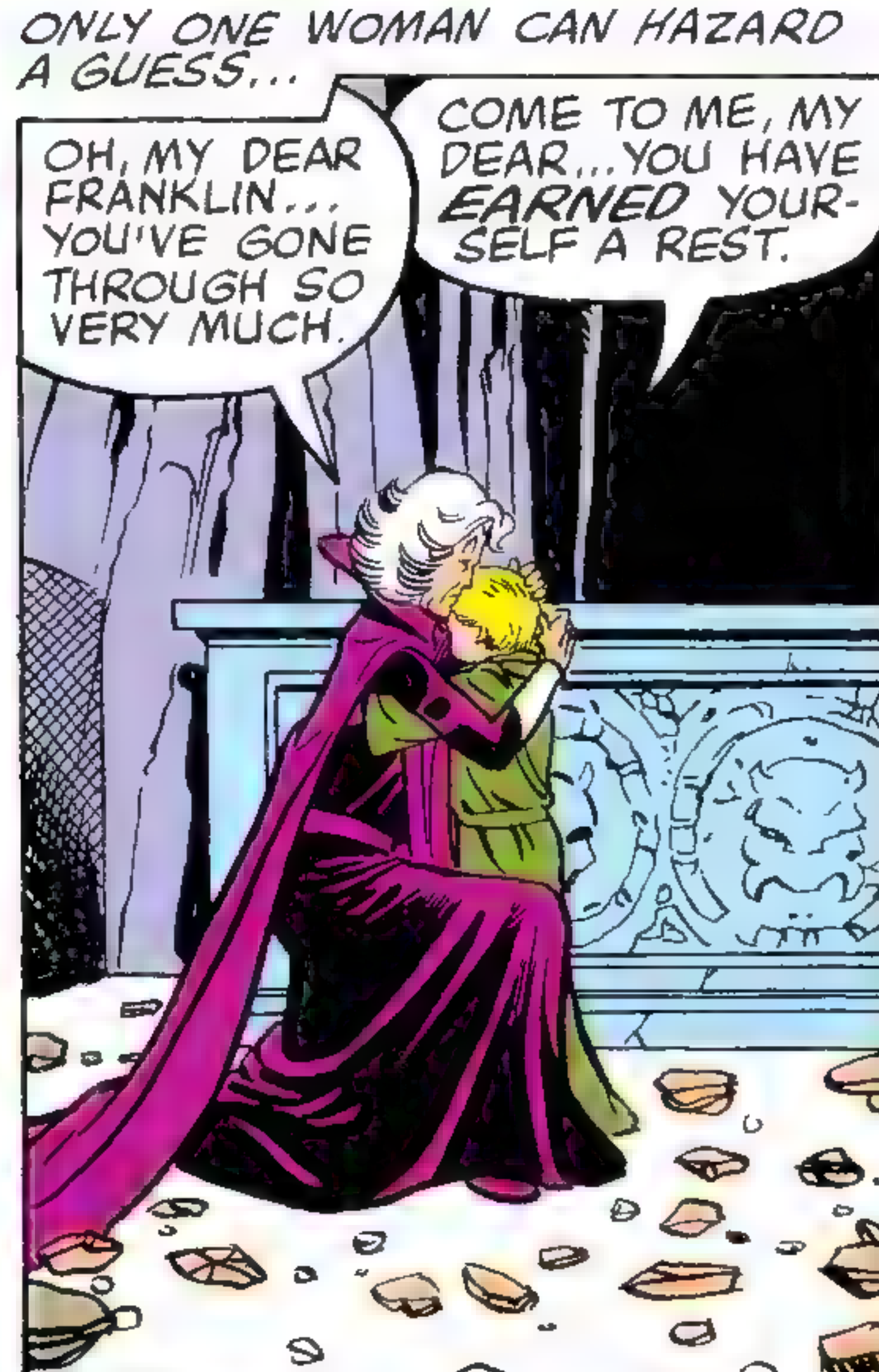
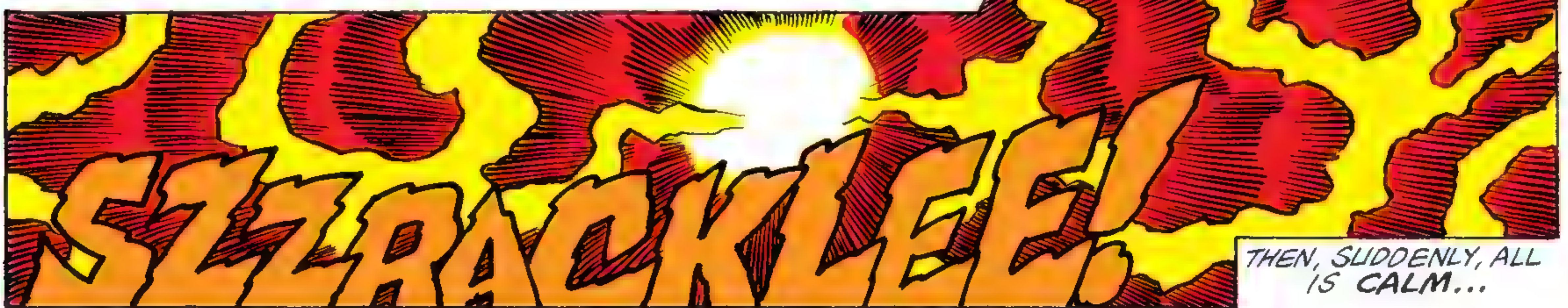


--WRONG?!?





NEW SALEM CRACKLES WITH FIERY ENERGY... WITH COSMIC FORCE... WITH A POWER BORN IN A CHILD
WHOSE PARENTS WERE BOTH GENETICALLY METAMORPHOSIZED!



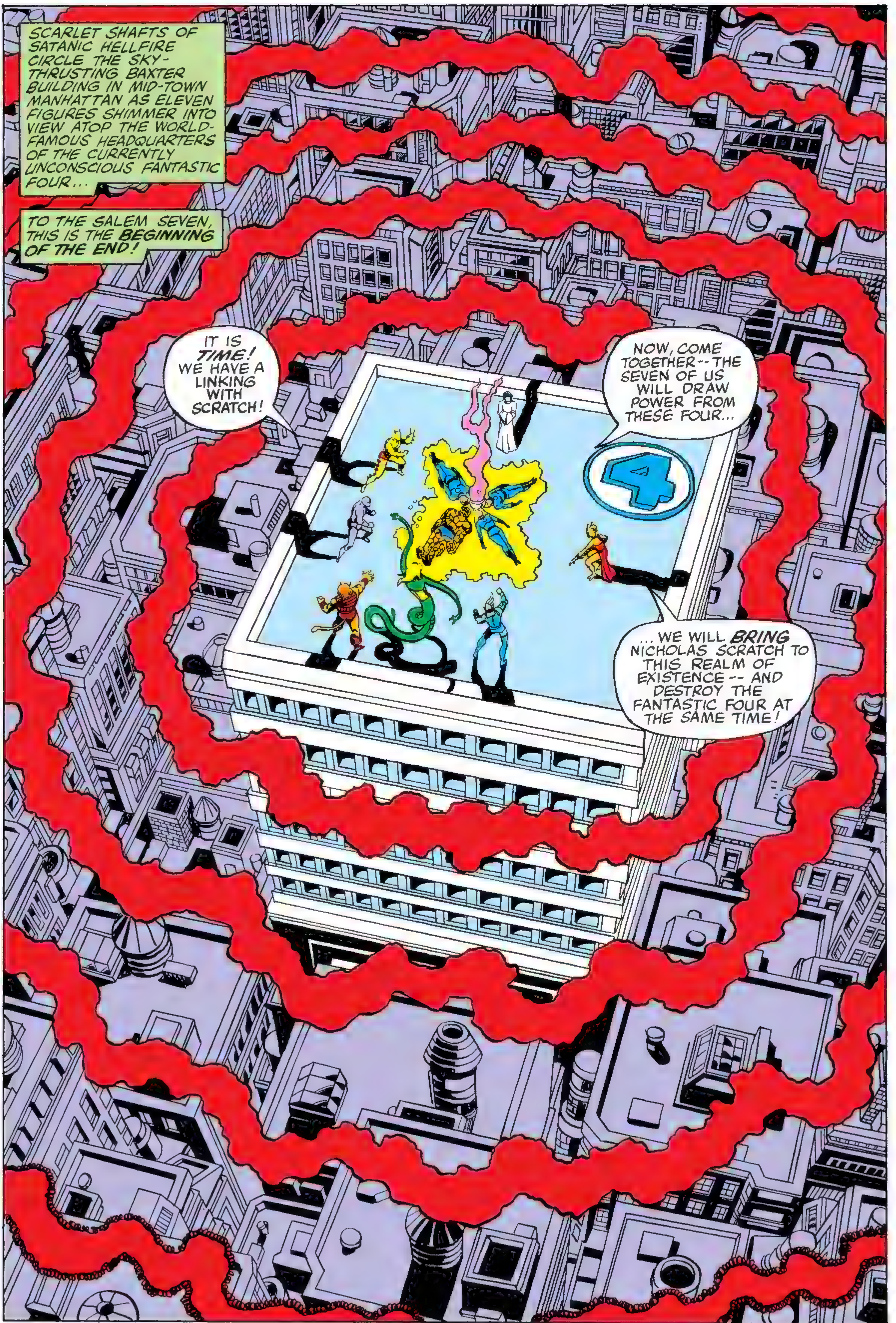
SCARLET SHAFTS OF SATANIC HELLFIRE CIRCLE THE SKY-THRUSTING BAXTER BUILDING IN MID-TOWN MANHATTAN AS ELEVEN FIGURES SHIMMER INTO VIEW ATOP THE WORLD-FAMOUS HEADQUARTERS OF THE CURRENTLY UNCONSCIOUS FANTASTIC FOUR...

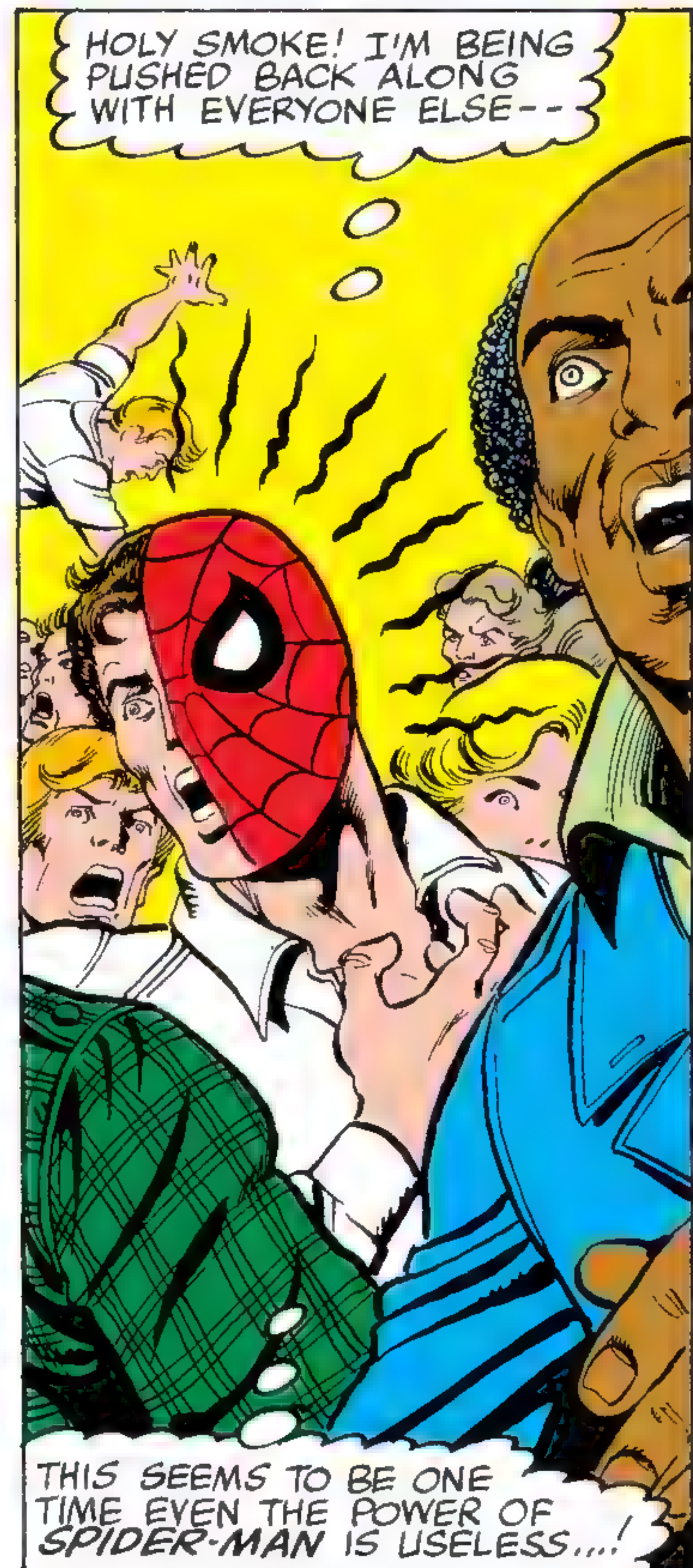
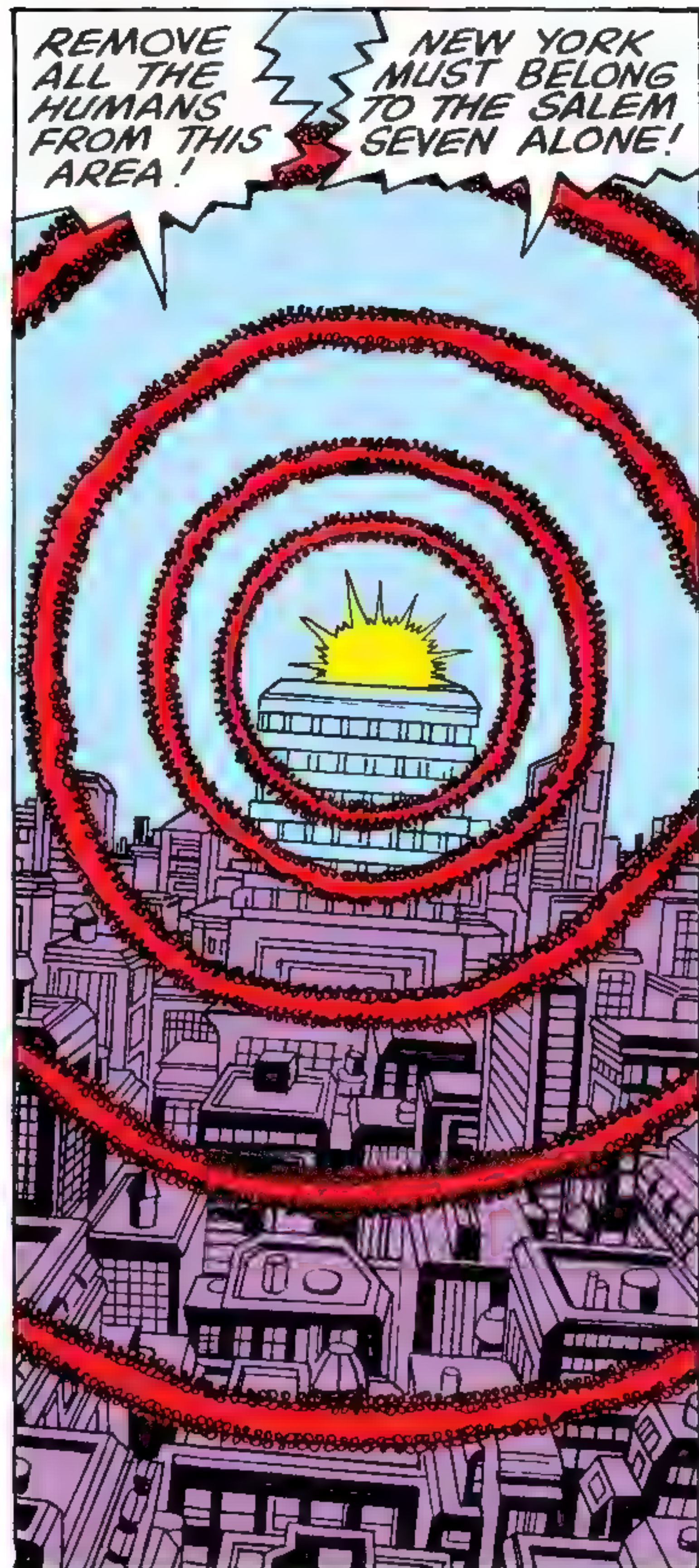
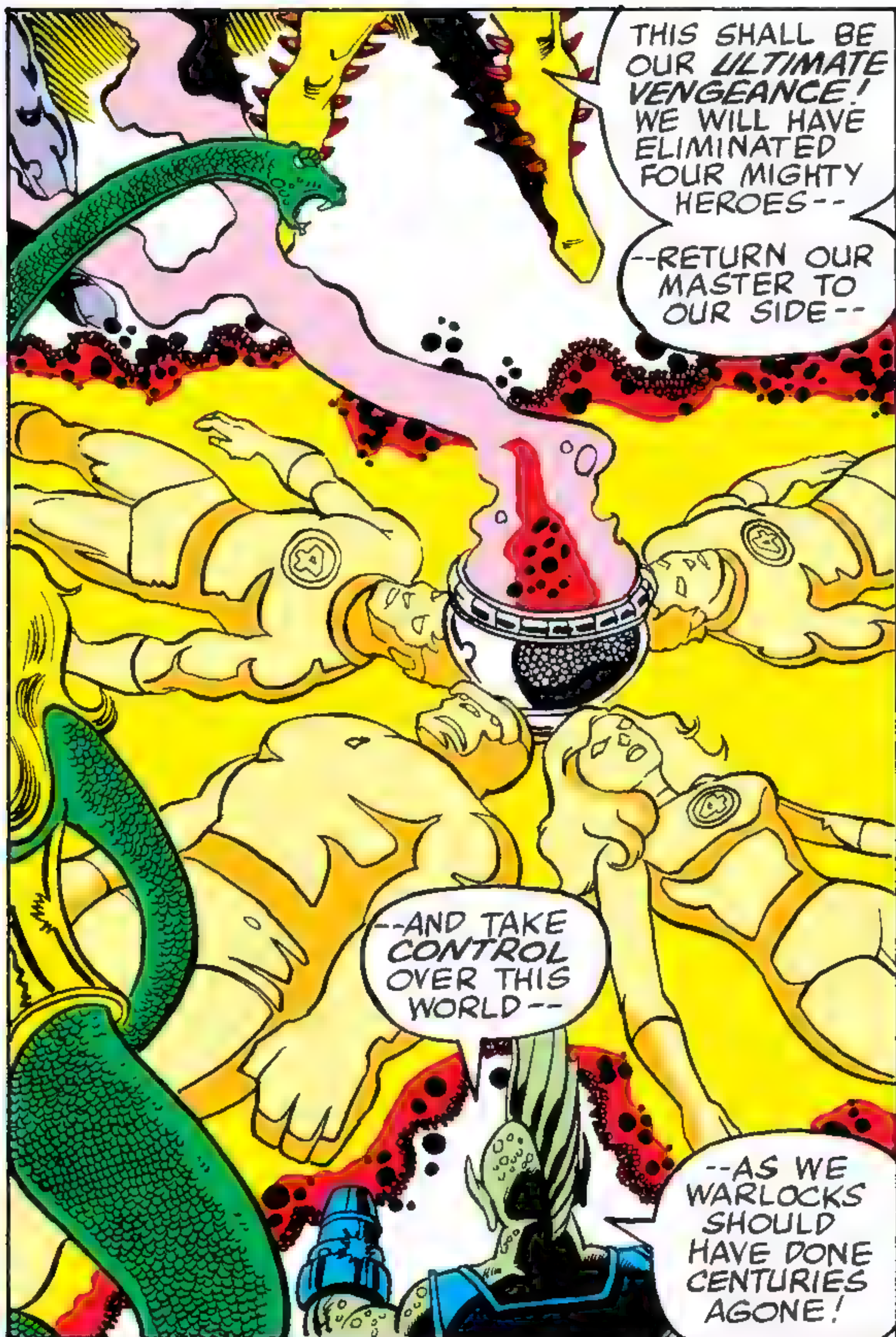
TO THE SALEM SEVEN, THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE END!

IT IS *TIME!*
WE HAVE A LINKING WITH SCRATCH!

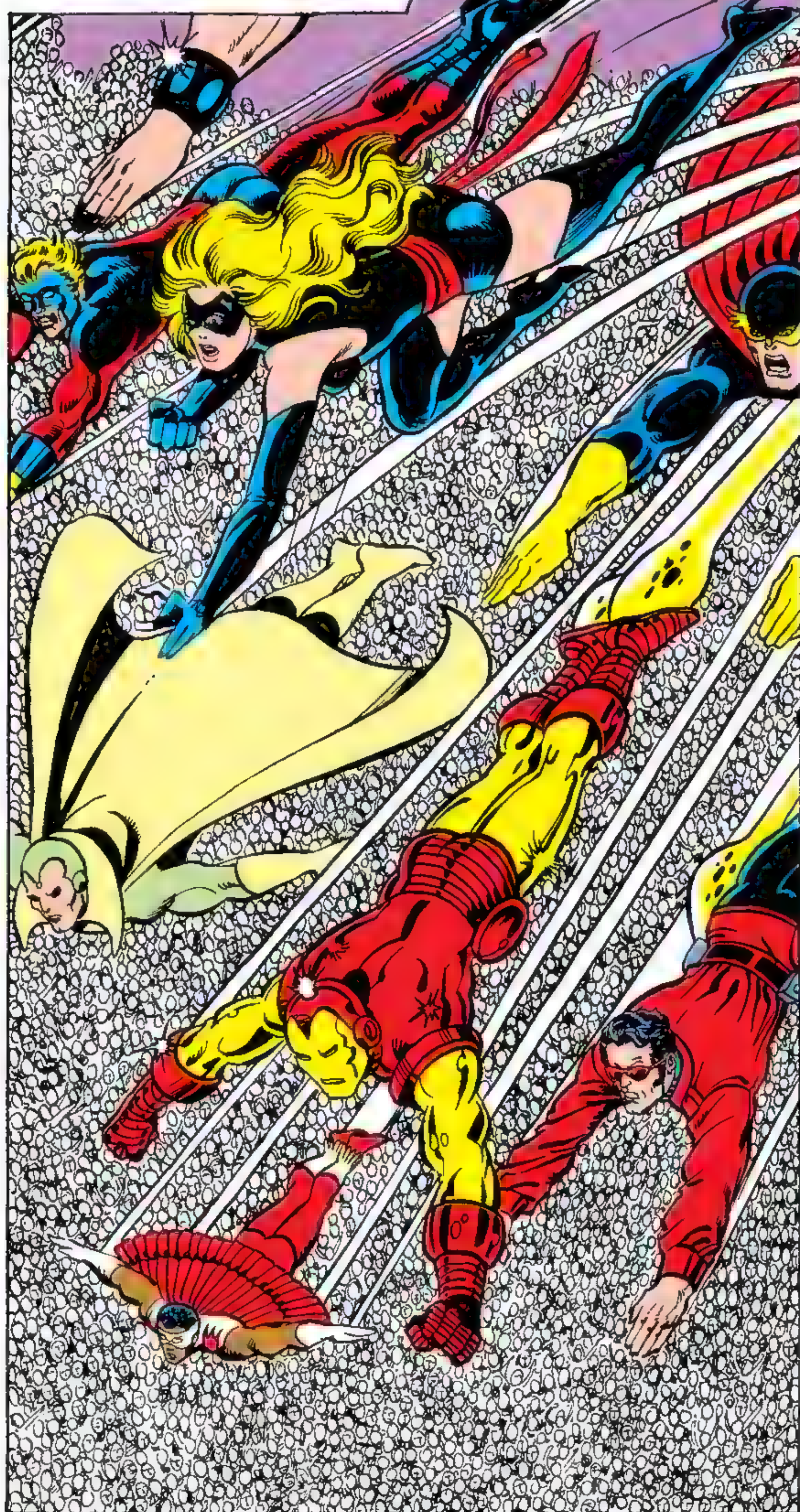
NOW, COME TOGETHER-- THE SEVEN OF US WILL DRAW POWER FROM THESE FOUR...

... WE WILL *BRING* NICHOLAS SCRATCH TO THIS REALM OF EXISTENCE -- AND DESTROY THE FANTASTIC FOUR AT THE SAME TIME!

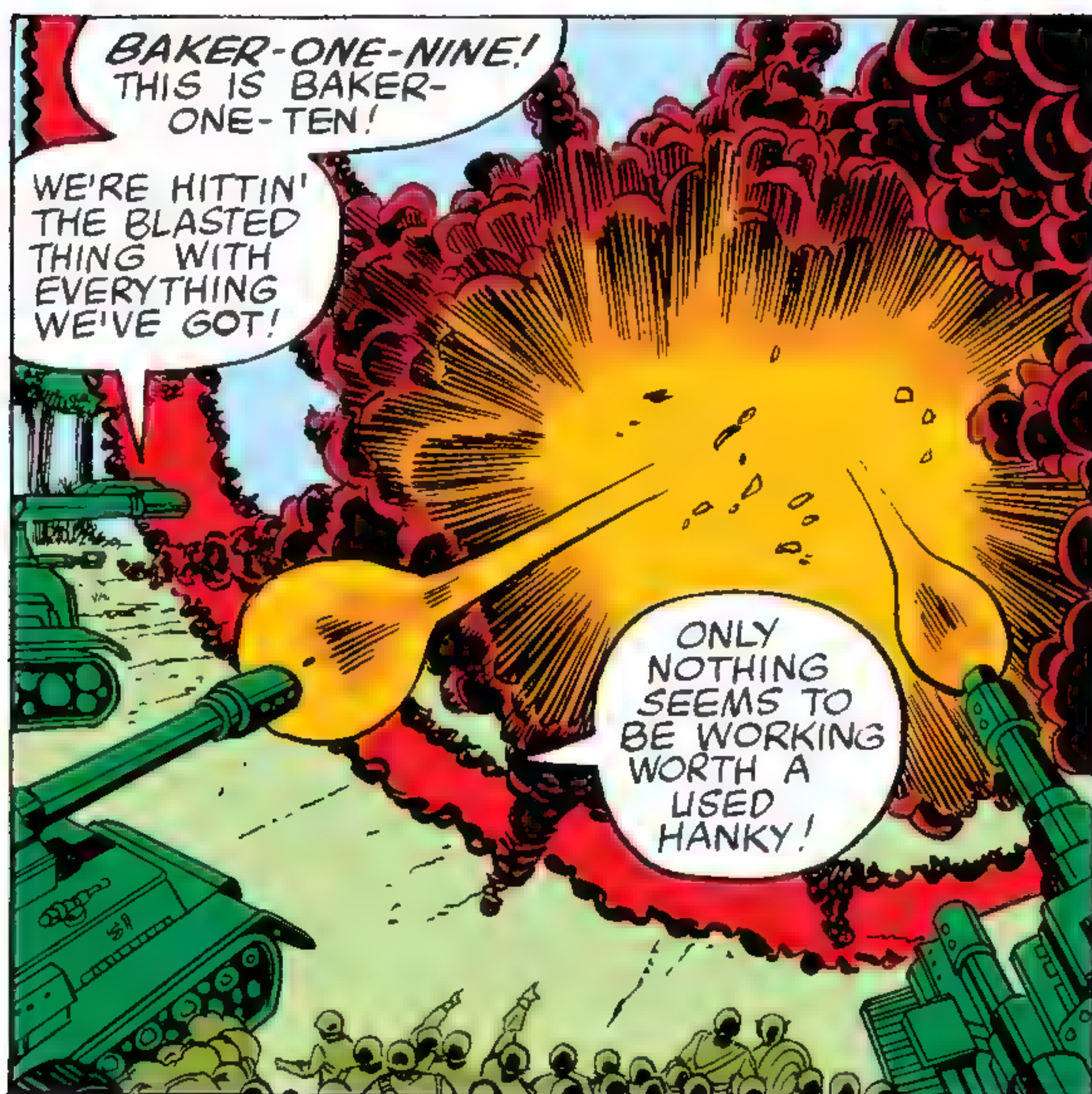




FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE CITY THEY SEEM TO APPEAR... EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES... ALL ATTACKING IN UNISON...



...AND ALL OF THEM FAILING MISERABLY...



BAKER-ONE-NINE!
THIS IS BAKER-
ONE-TEN!

WE'RE HITTIN'
THE BLASTED
THING WITH
EVERYTHING
WE'VE GOT!

ONLY
NOTHING
SEEMS TO
BE WORKING
WORTH A
USED HANKY!

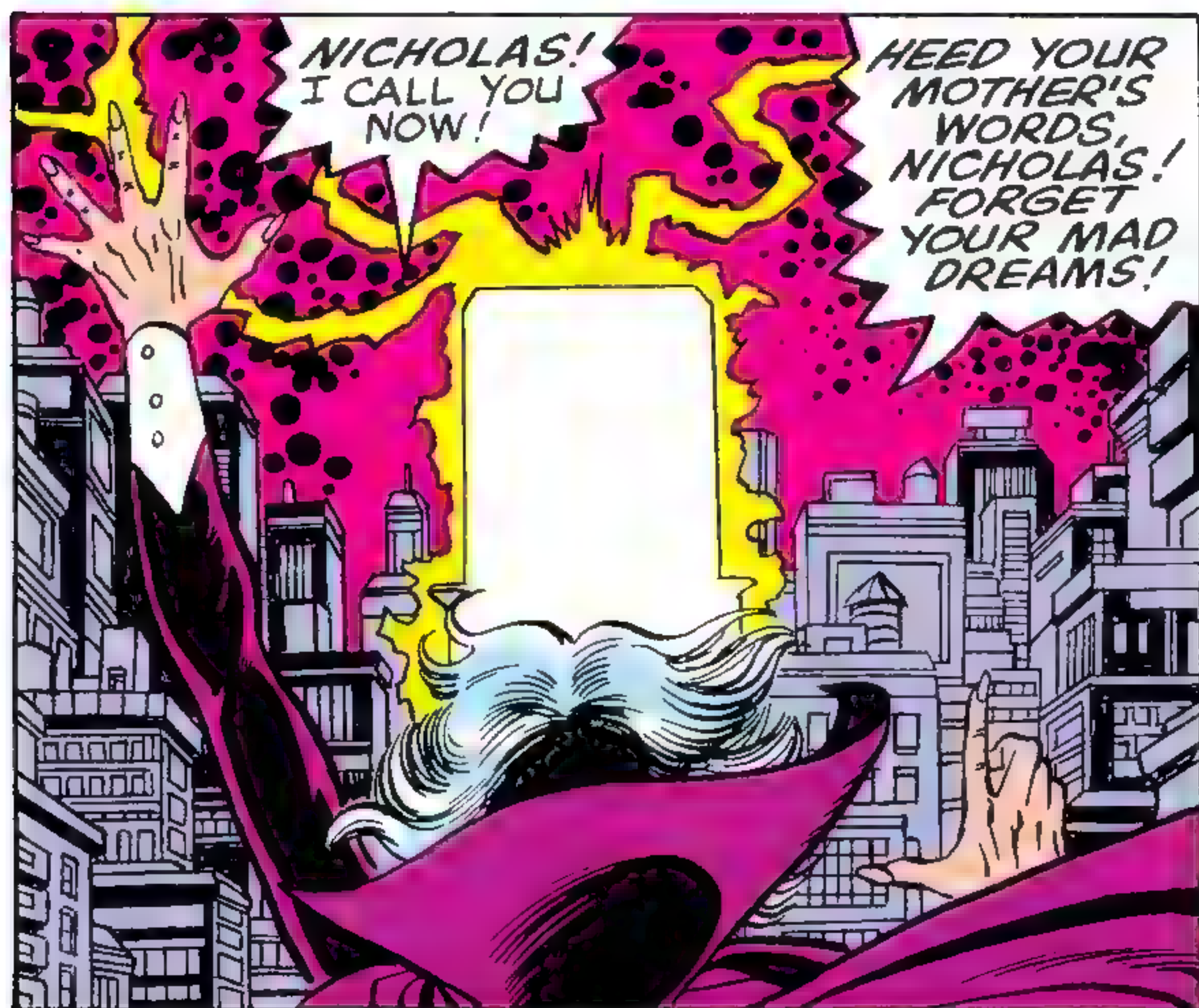
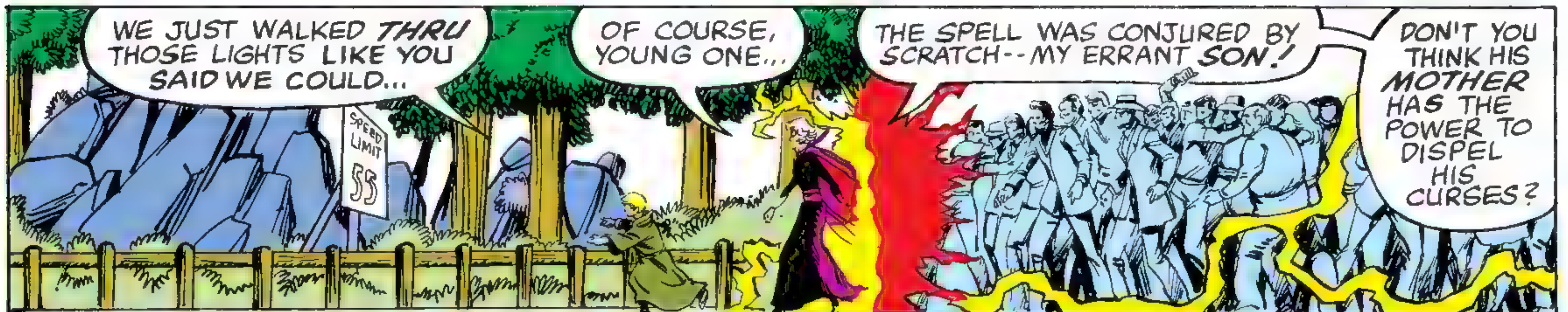
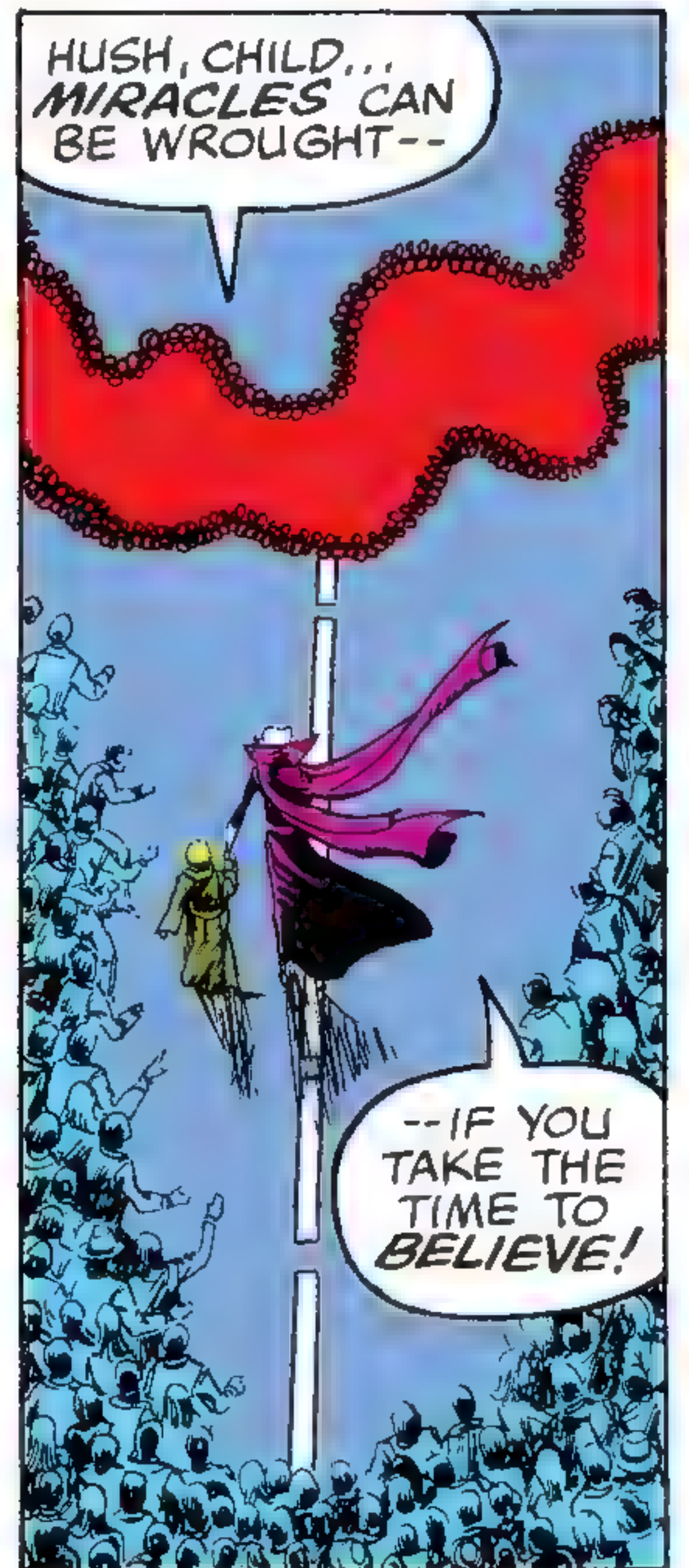
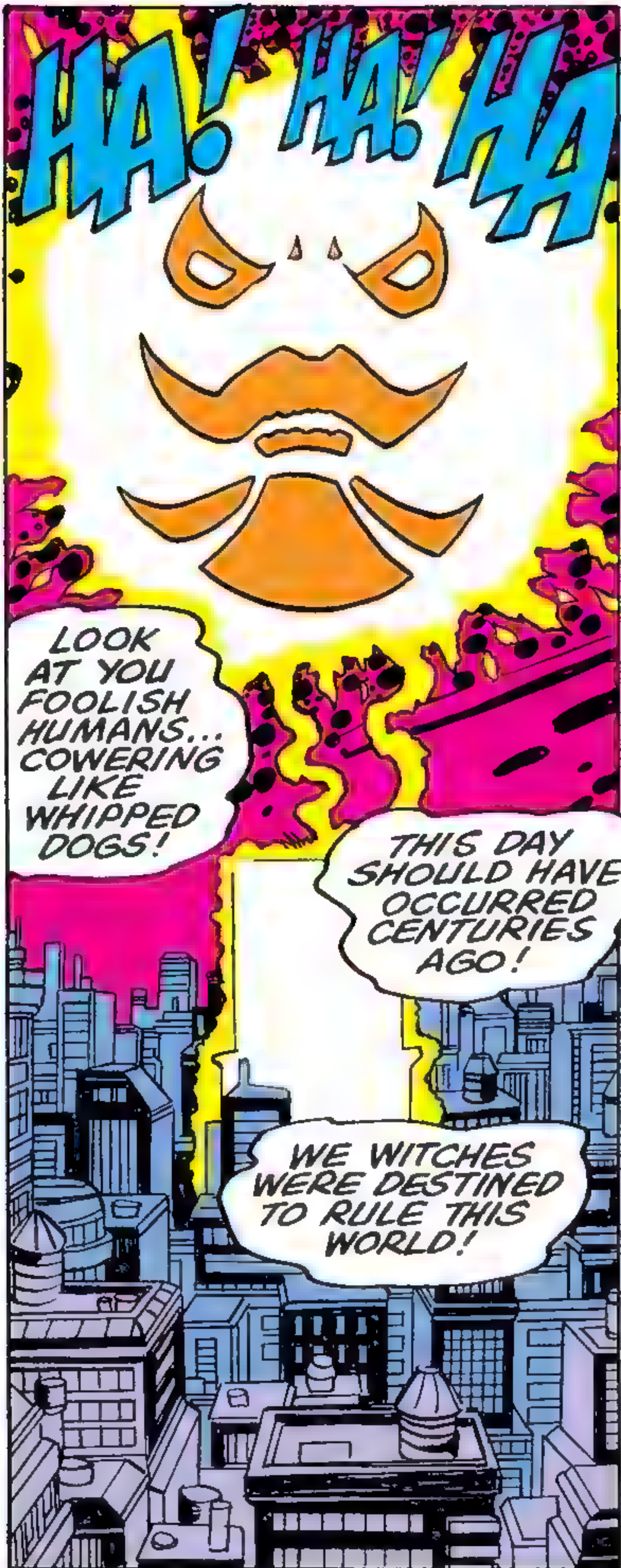


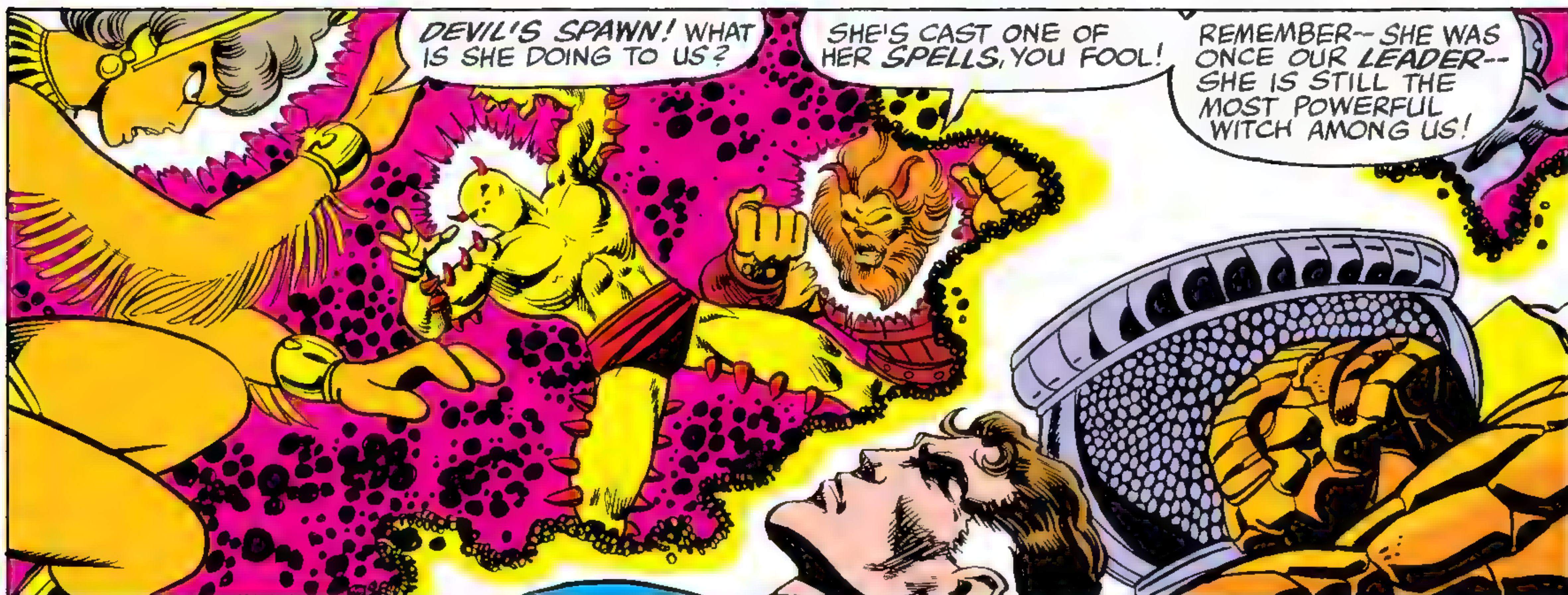
COME ON, GENERAL...
I'M TELLING YOU,
TANK-FIRE IS USE-
LESS HERE.

YOU'LL
ONLY
CAUSE
MORE
DAMAGE
THAN
GOOD!

YOU
GOT ANY
BETTER
IDEAS,
CAPTAIN
AMERICA?

GENERAL, I ONLY
WISH I DID!





DEVIL'S SPAWN! WHAT IS SHE DOING TO US?

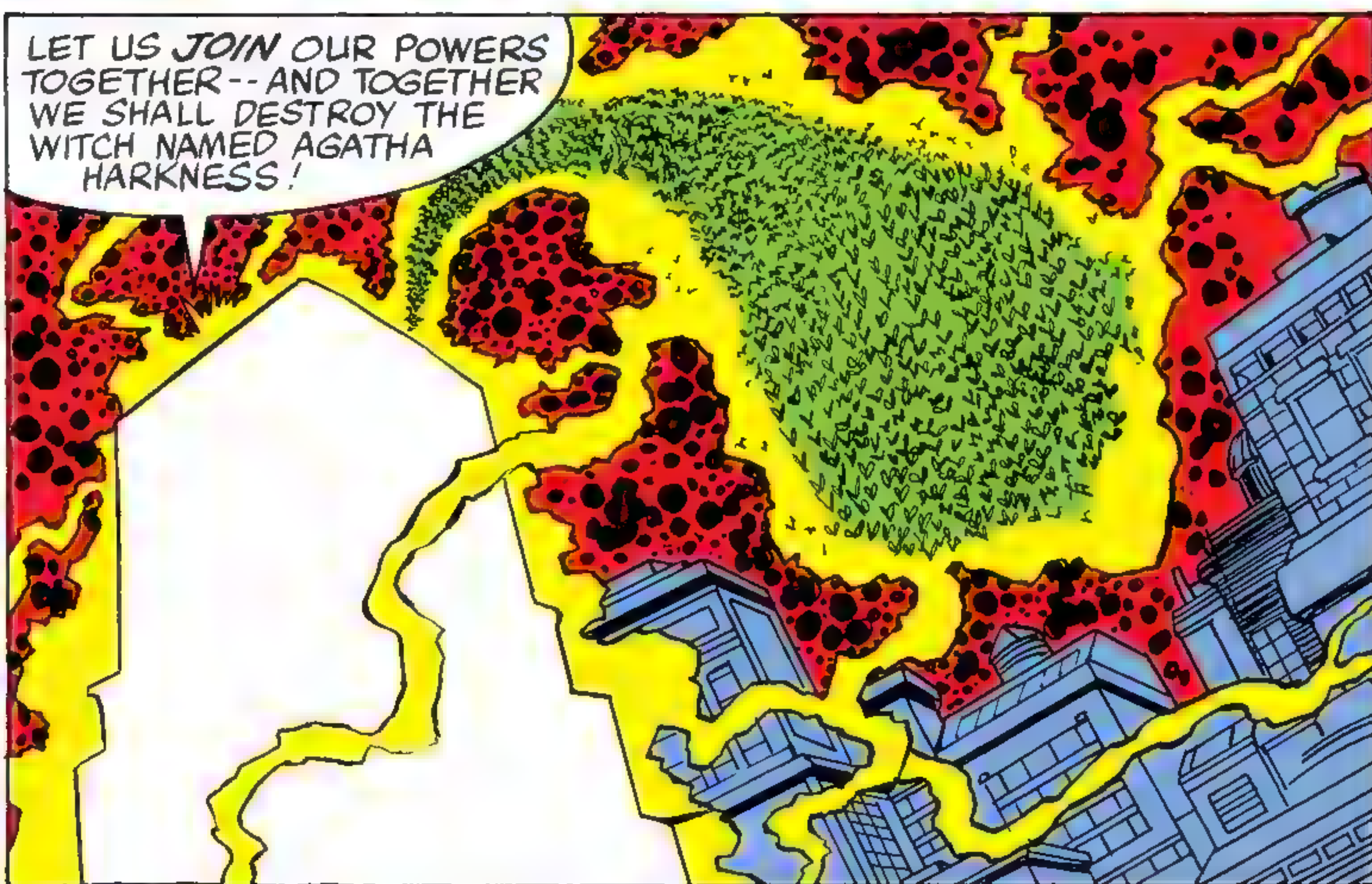
SHE'S CAST ONE OF HER SPELLS, YOU FOOL!

REMEMBER-- SHE WAS ONCE OUR LEADER-- SHE IS STILL THE MOST POWERFUL WITCH AMONG US!



HER POWER WILL MEAN NOTHING ONCE SHE IS STRIPPED TO THE BONE!

DO NOT FORGET, WE ARE WITCHES, TOO... WE HAVE POWERS OTHER THAN THOSE SCRATCH BEQUEATHED US!

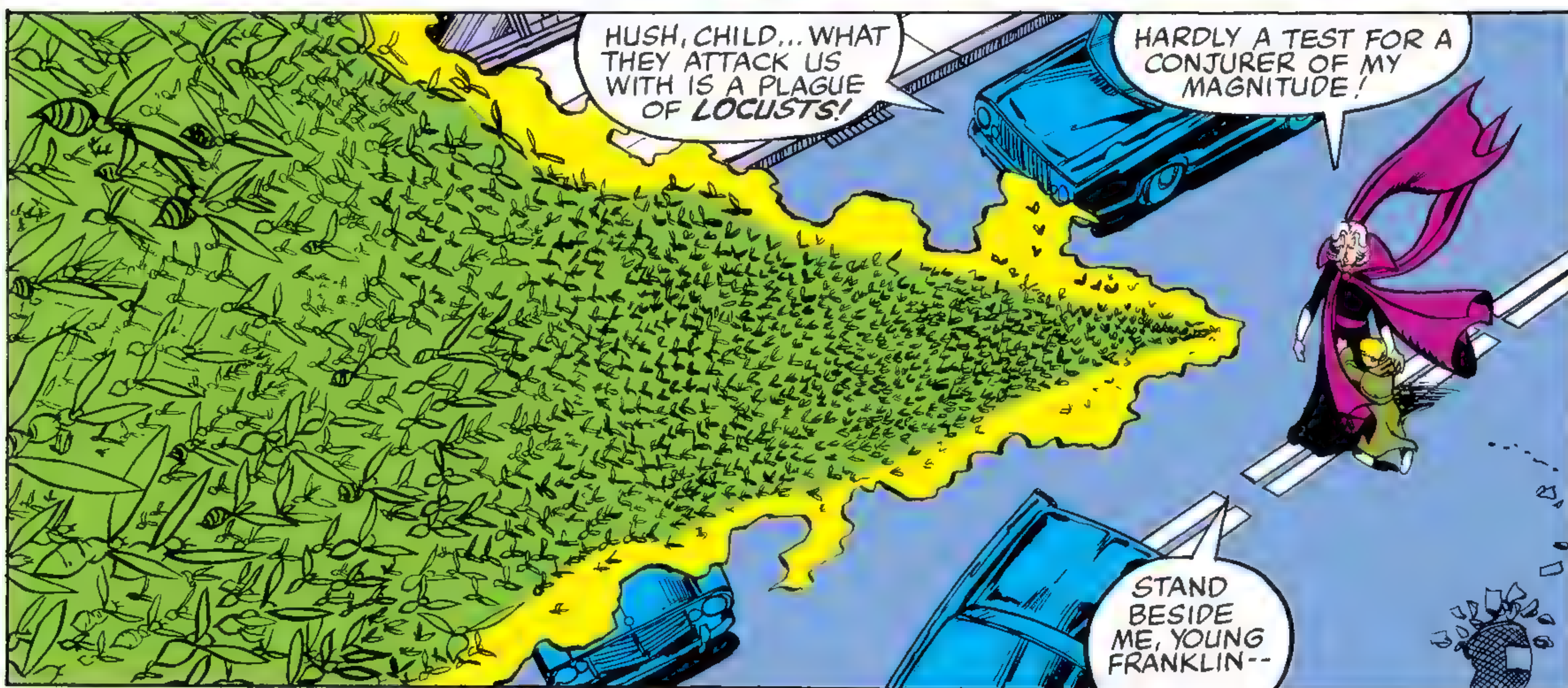


LET US JOIN OUR POWERS TOGETHER-- AND TOGETHER WE SHALL DESTROY THE WITCH NAMED AGATHA HARKNESS!



AUNT AGATHA-- TH- THEY'RE SENDING BUGS AT YOU!

WHAT CAN WE DO?



HUSH, CHILD... WHAT THEY ATTACK US WITH IS A PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS!

HARDLY A TEST FOR A CONJURER OF MY MAGNITUDE!

STAND BESIDE ME, YOUNG FRANKLIN--

--AND OBSERVE THE MIRACLES
A TRUE WITCH CAN CREATE!

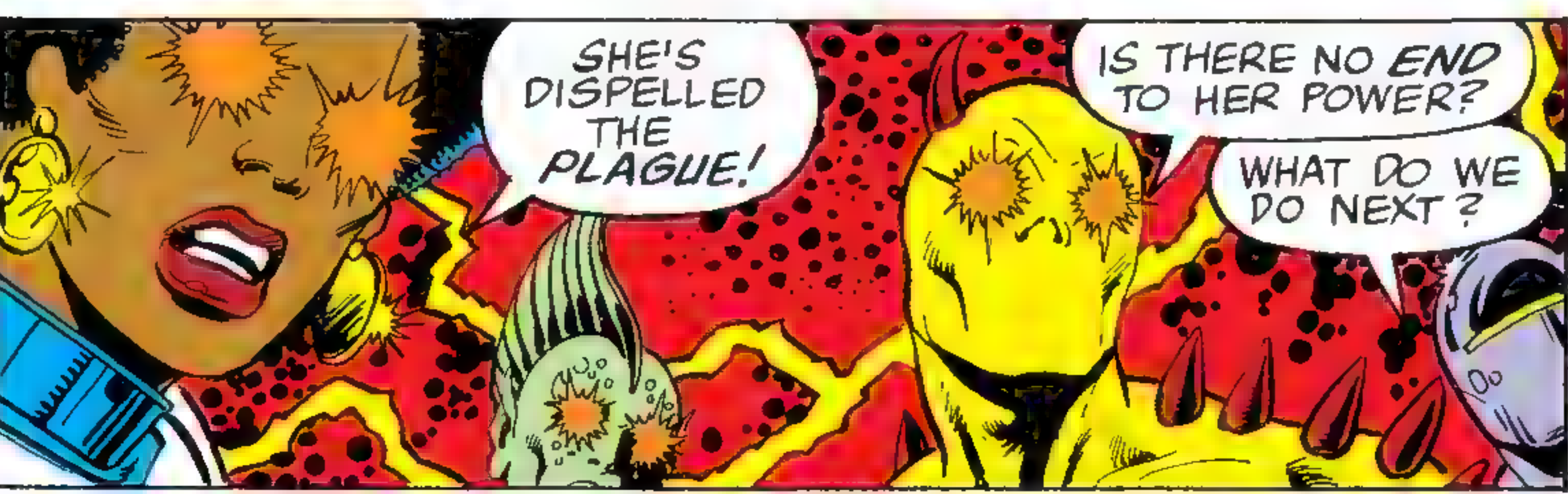


THE SKY SHUDDERS AND HEAVES,
THE WIND WHIRLS AND WELPS AND
BEGINS TO SPIN.

IN AN INSTANT, A
GREAT SCARLET
TORNADO WHIPS
THROUGH THE
HORDE OF LOCUSTS,
DRAWING THEM ALL
TO ITS WHIRLING
VORTEX.



AND THEN, ALL
IS SILENT AGAIN.



SHE'S
DISPELLED
THE
PLAGUE!

IS THERE NO END
TO HER POWER?

WHAT DO WE
DO NEXT?

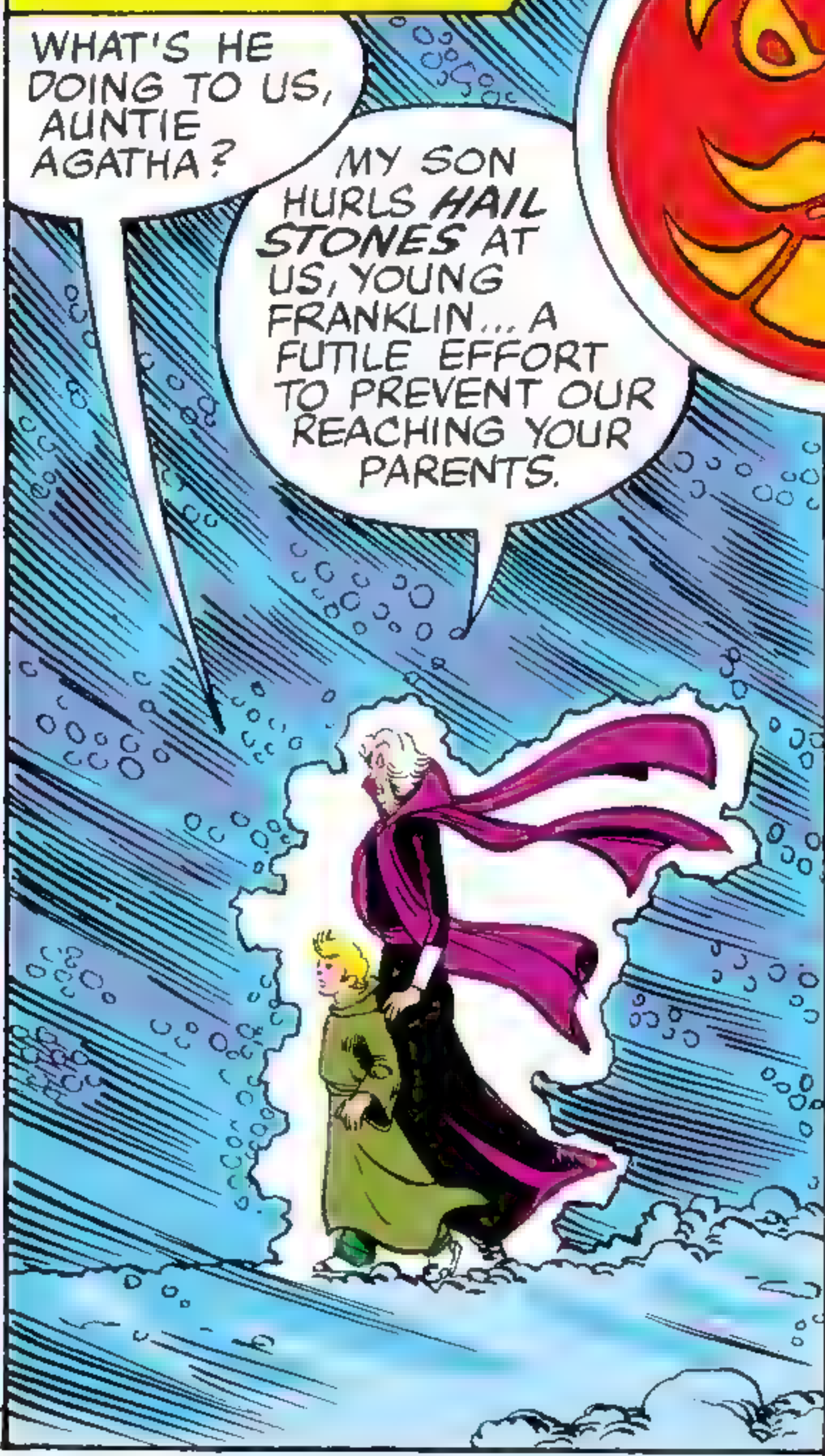


YOU DO NOTHING,
YOU WEAK-MINDED
SIMPLETONS!

AGATHA HARKNESS
IS TOO POWERFUL FOR
YOU!

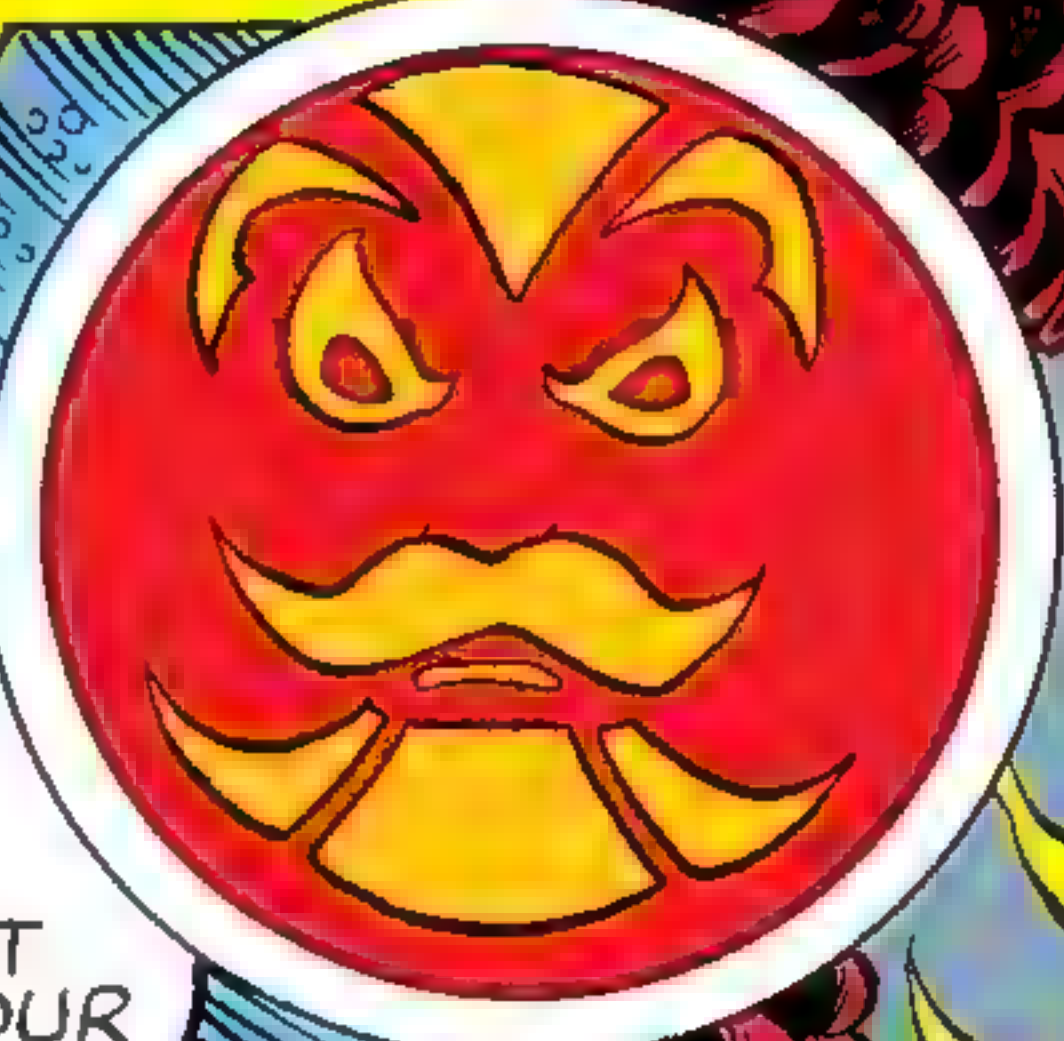
THUS THE
BATTLE MUST
RAGE BETWEEN
MOTHER AND
SON!

ONCE AGAIN THE SKY SHUDDERS,
BUT THIS TIME IT TURNS GREY
AND COLD, THEN GREAT
SPIRALING CHUNKS OF
JAGGED ICE RUSH
GROUNDWARD...



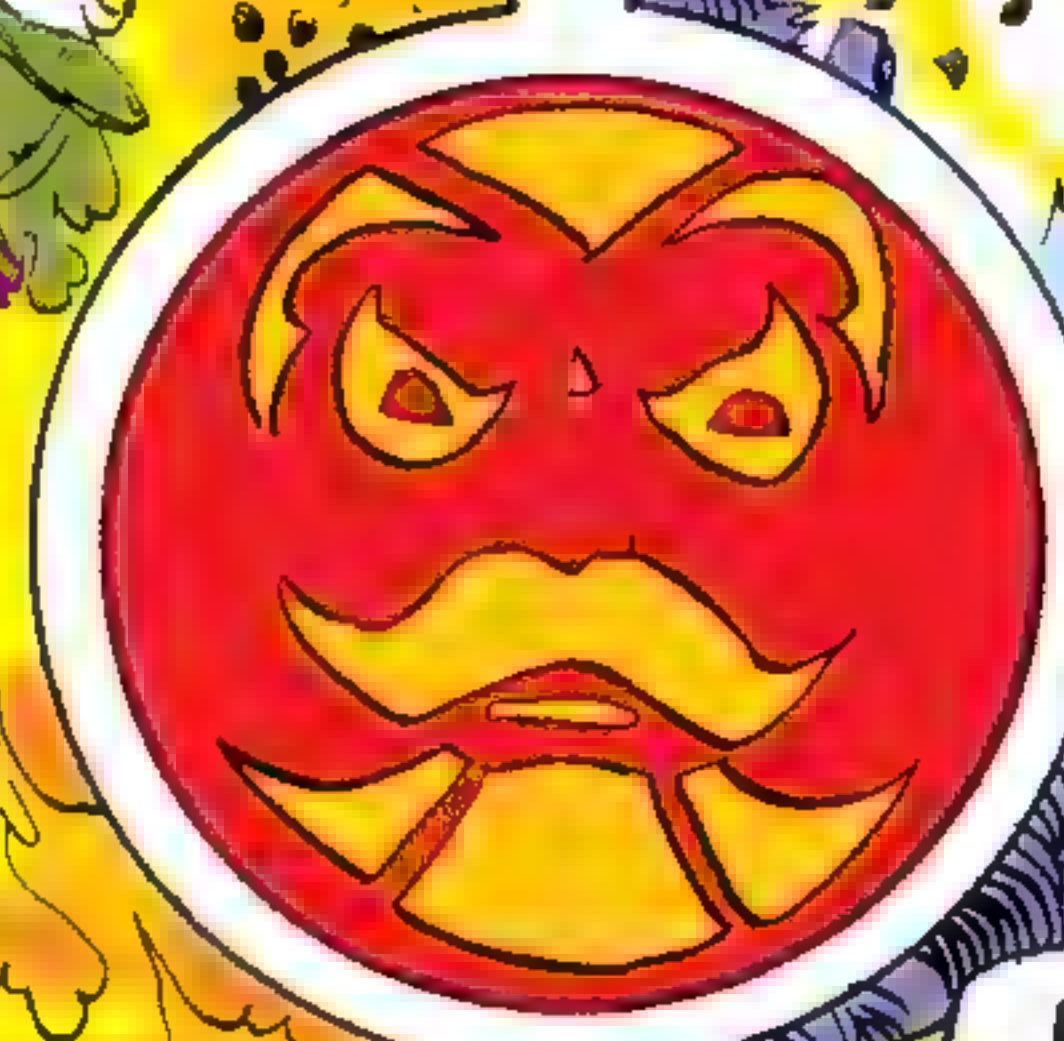
WHAT'S HE
DOING TO US,
AUNTIE
AGATHA?

MY SON
HURLS HAIL
STONES AT
US, YOUNG
FRANKLIN... A
FUTILE EFFORT
TO PREVENT OUR
REACHING YOUR
PARENTS.



DIE! DIE!

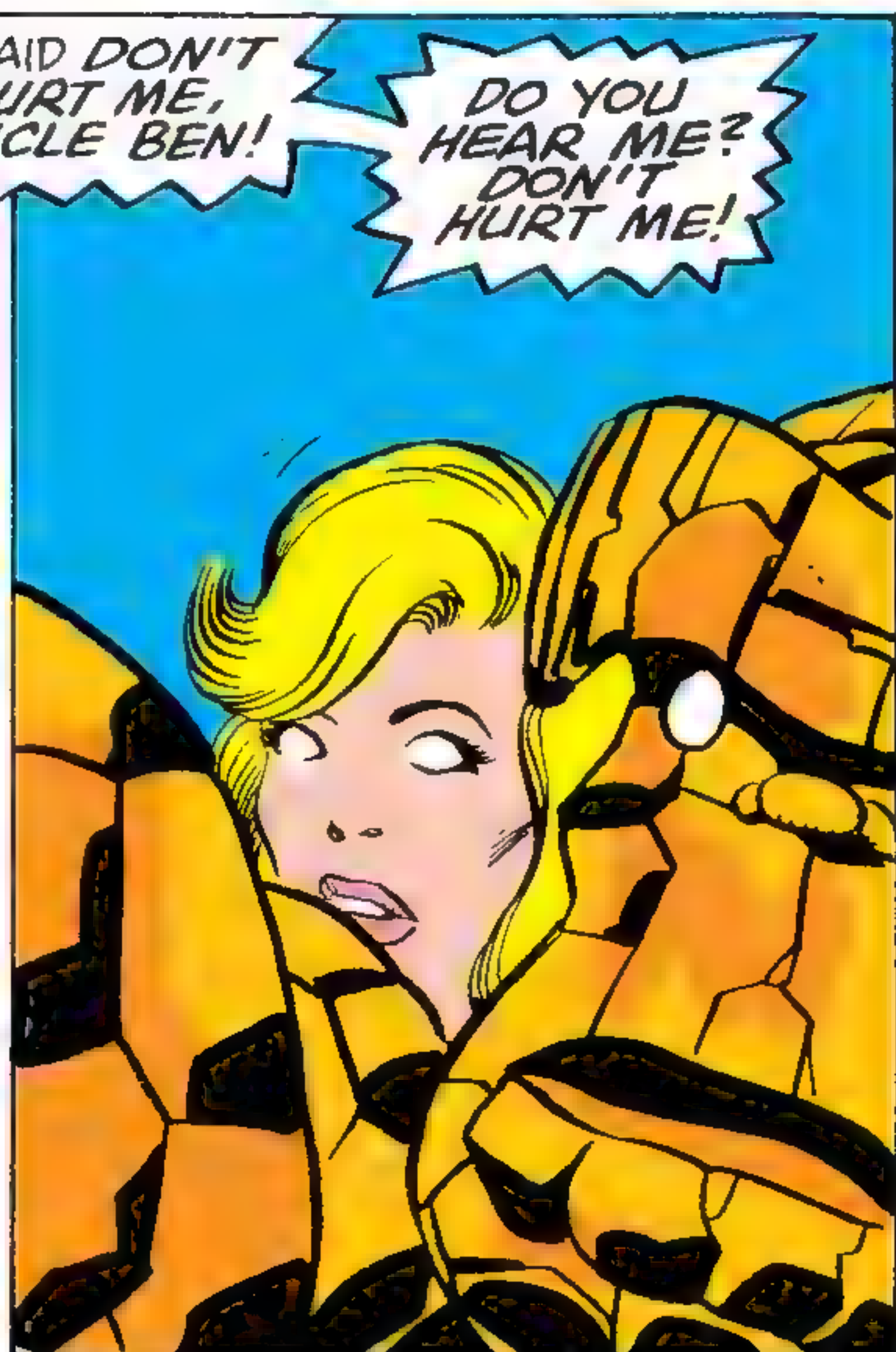
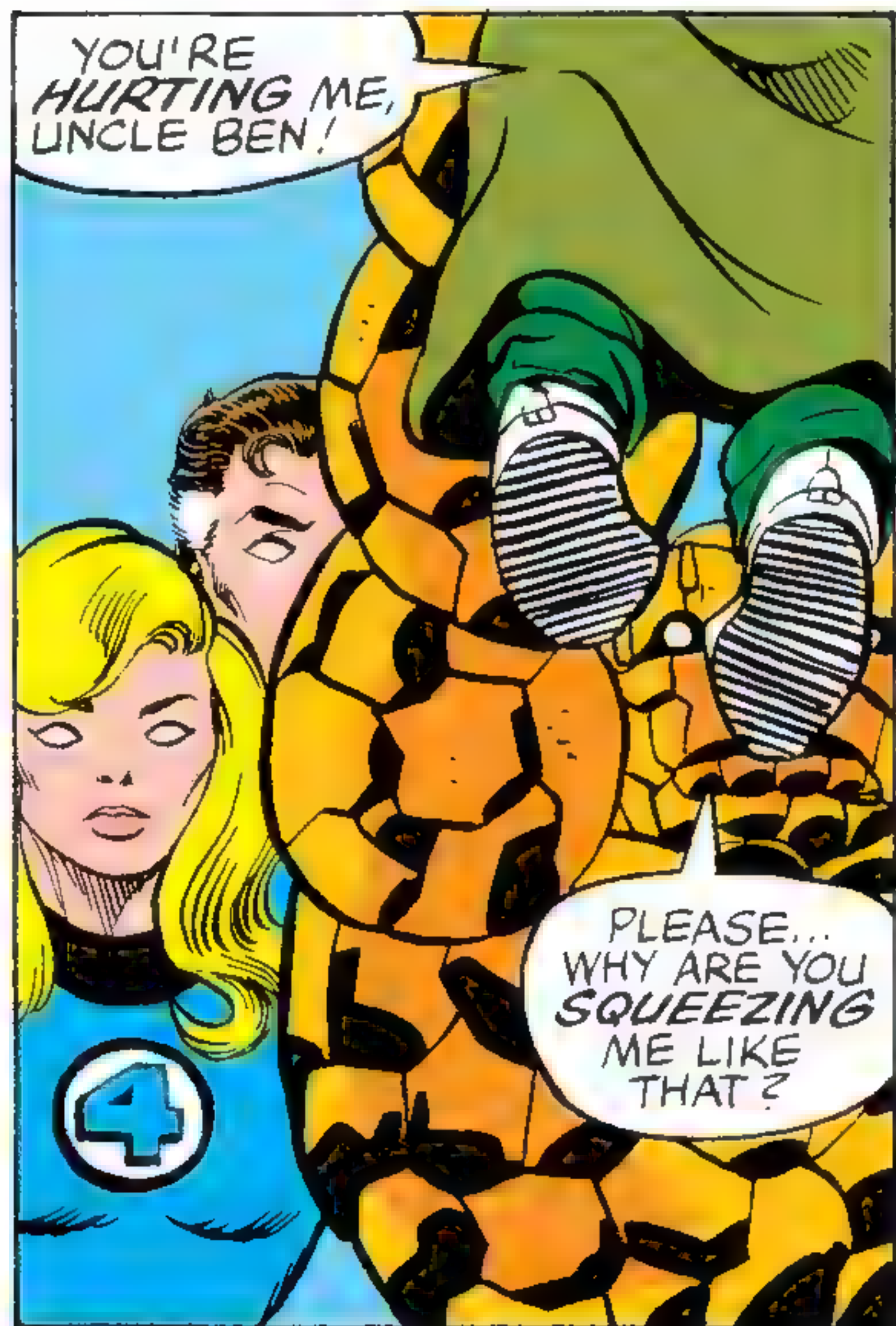
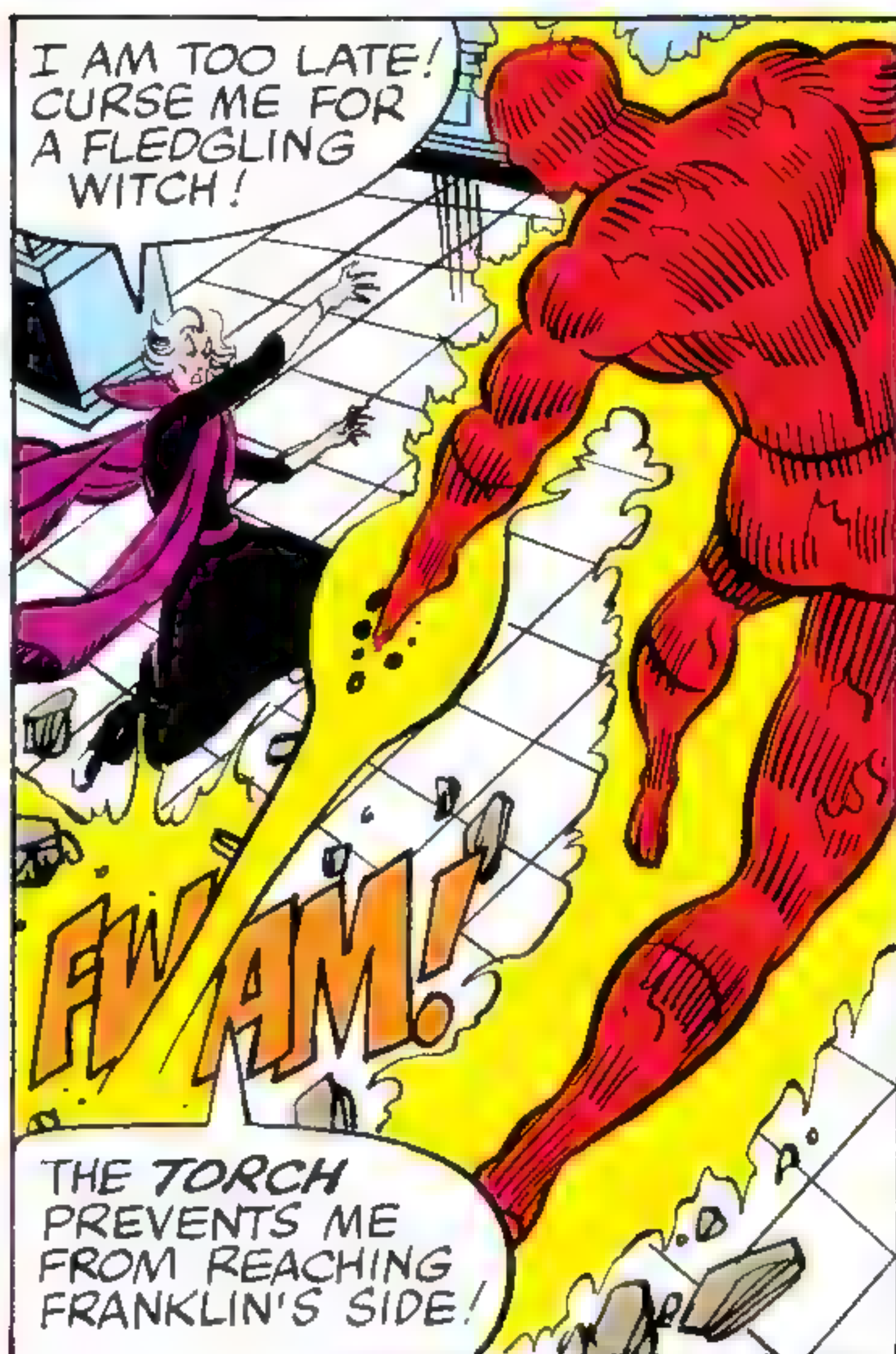
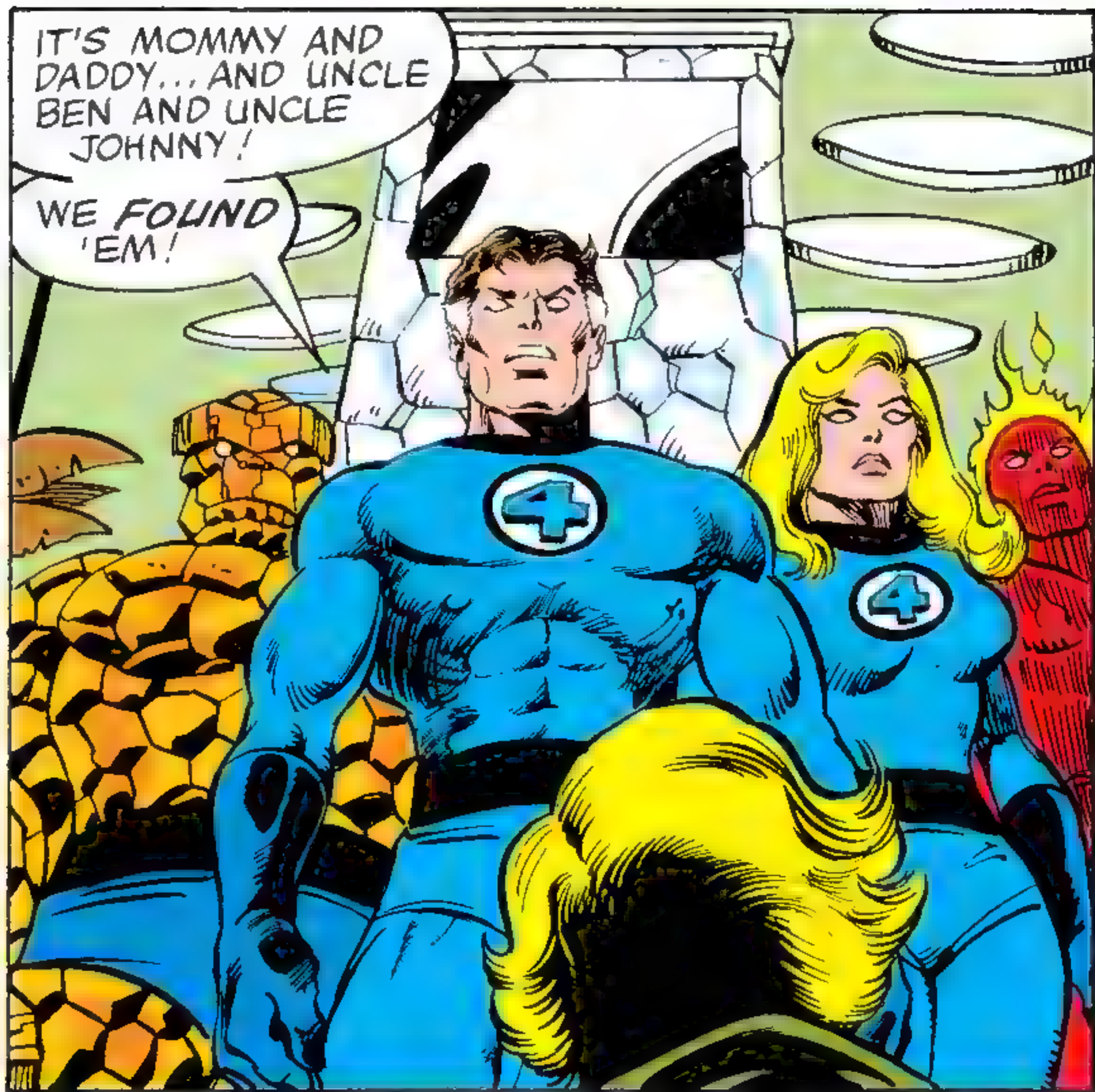
NOW
EVERY-
THING'S
FIRE...
BUT IT'S
NOT
TOUCHING
US.
HOW?

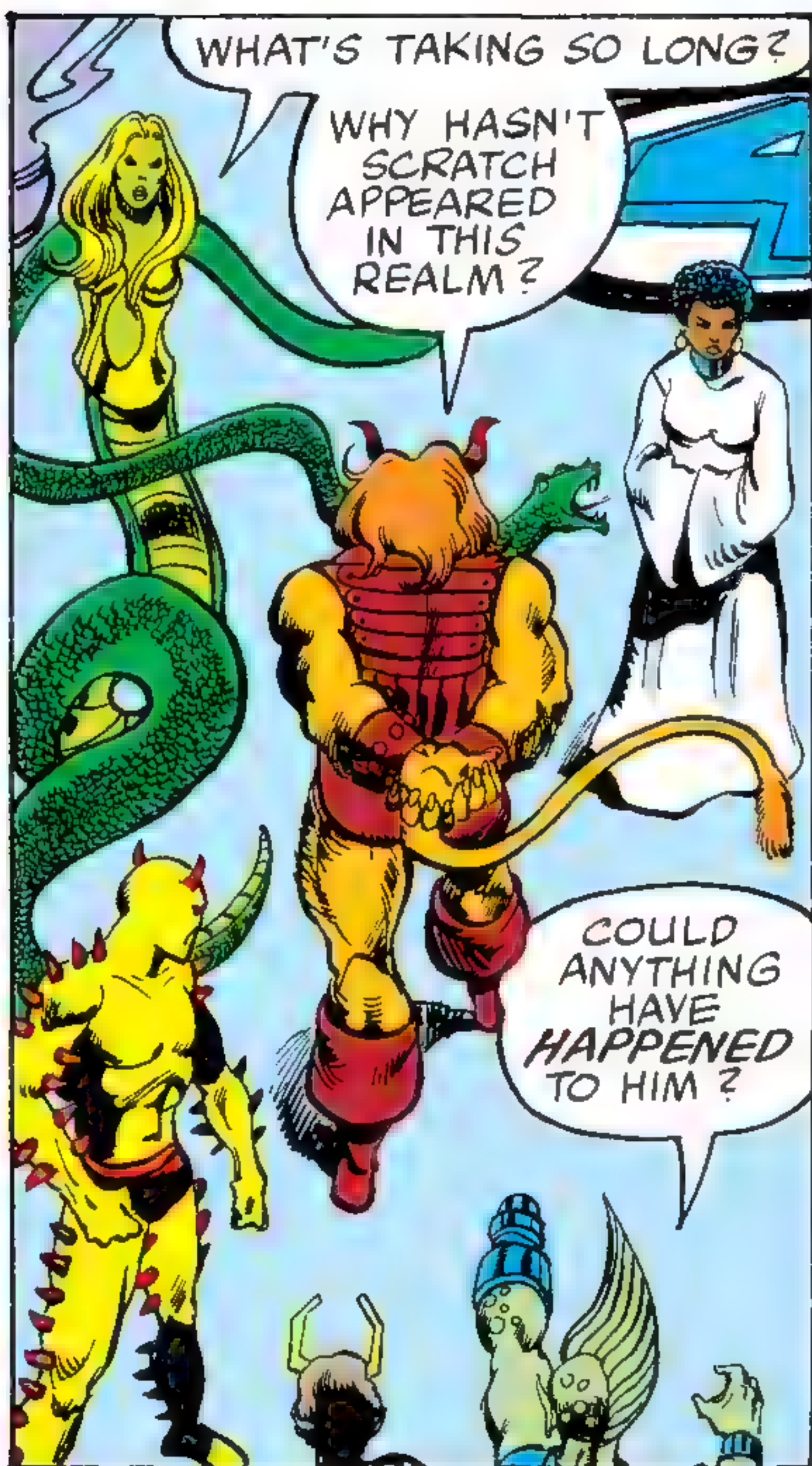


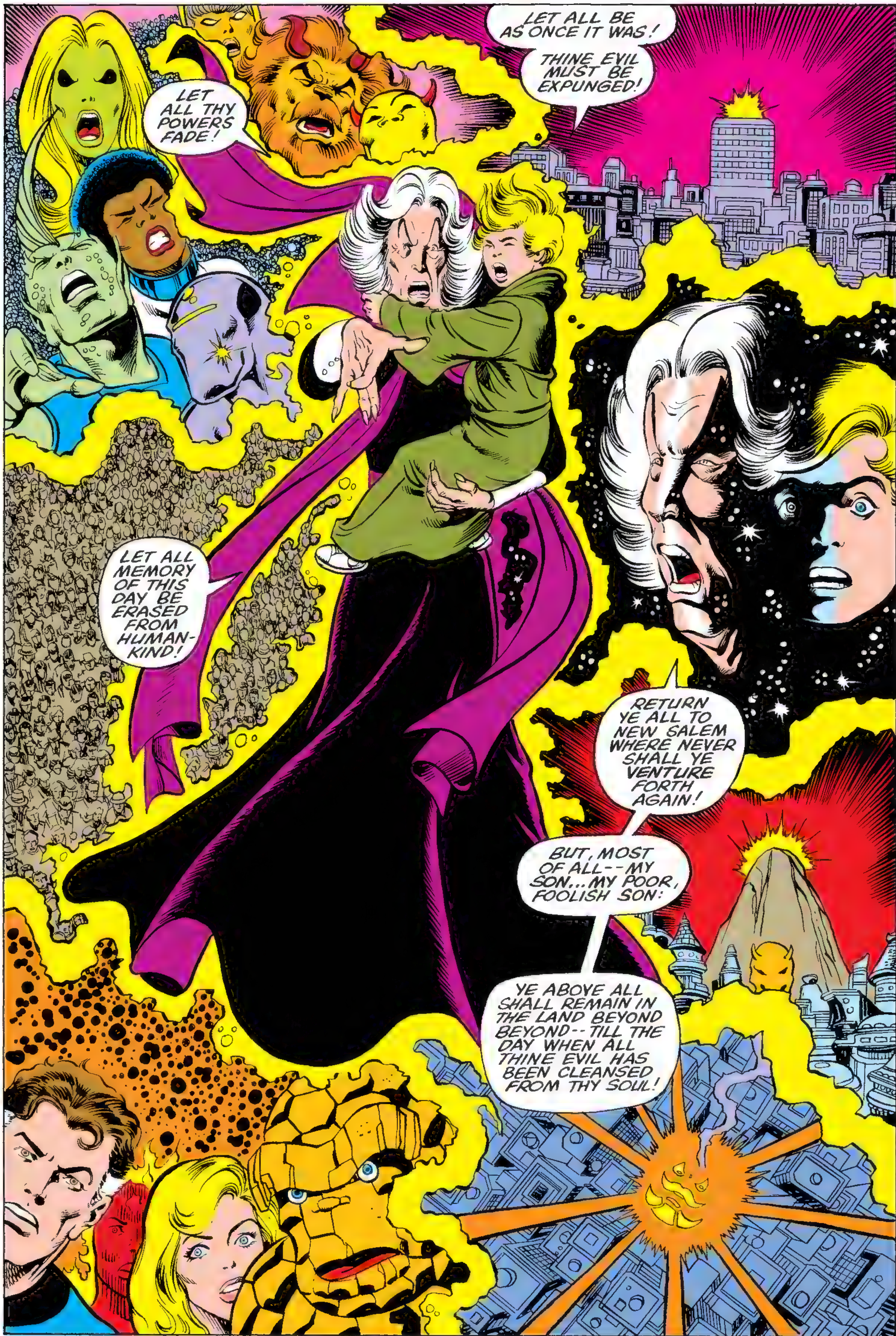
A SIMPLE SPELL...
NOTHING AN APPRENTICE
MYSTIC COULD NOT
CONJURE.

NO, DEAR LITTLE ONE
... NEITHER HAIL NOR
FIRE NOR STORM
SHALL DELAY OUR
REACHING YOUR
PARENTS' SIDE.

WHY WON'T YOU
DIE, BLAST YOU?







LET ALL BE
AS ONCE IT WAS!

THINE EVIL
MUST BE
EXPUNGED!

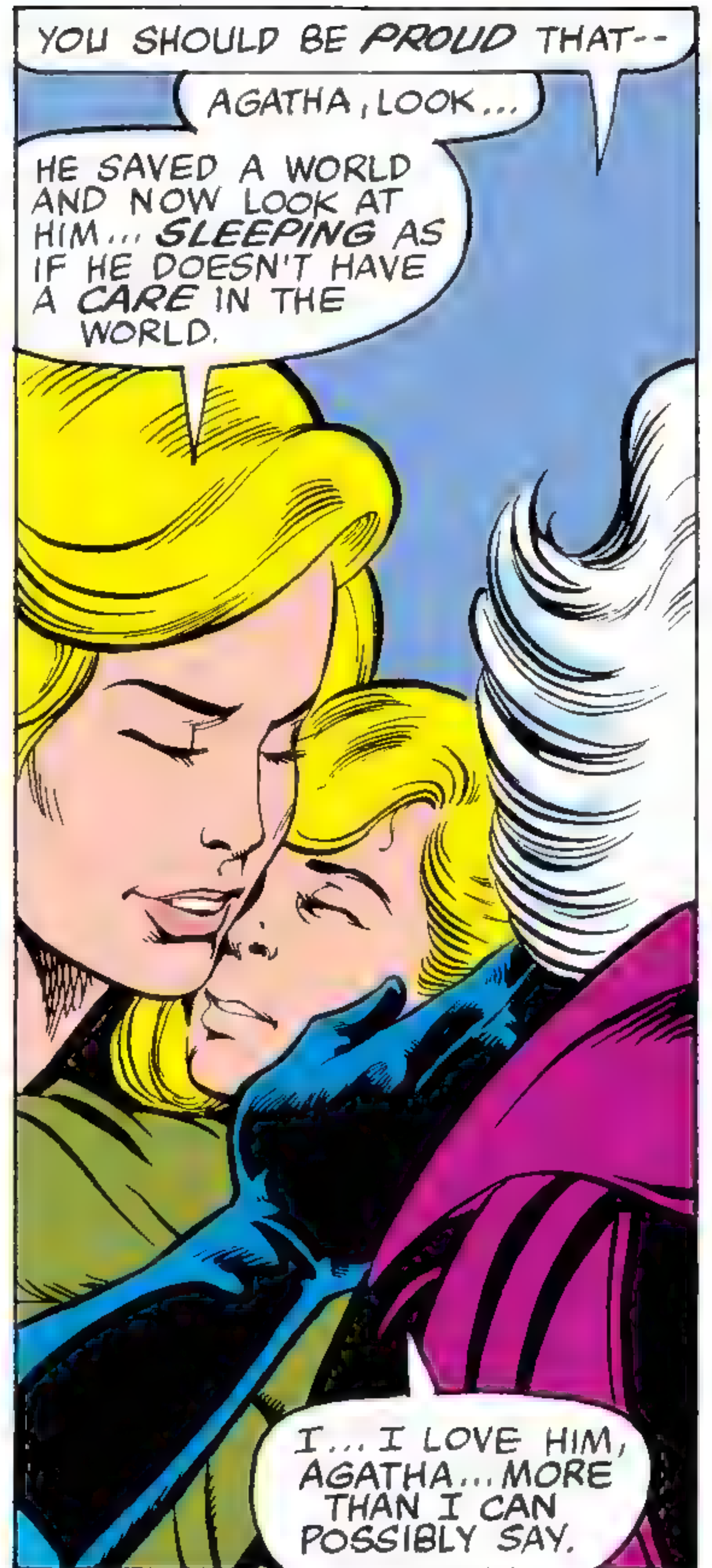
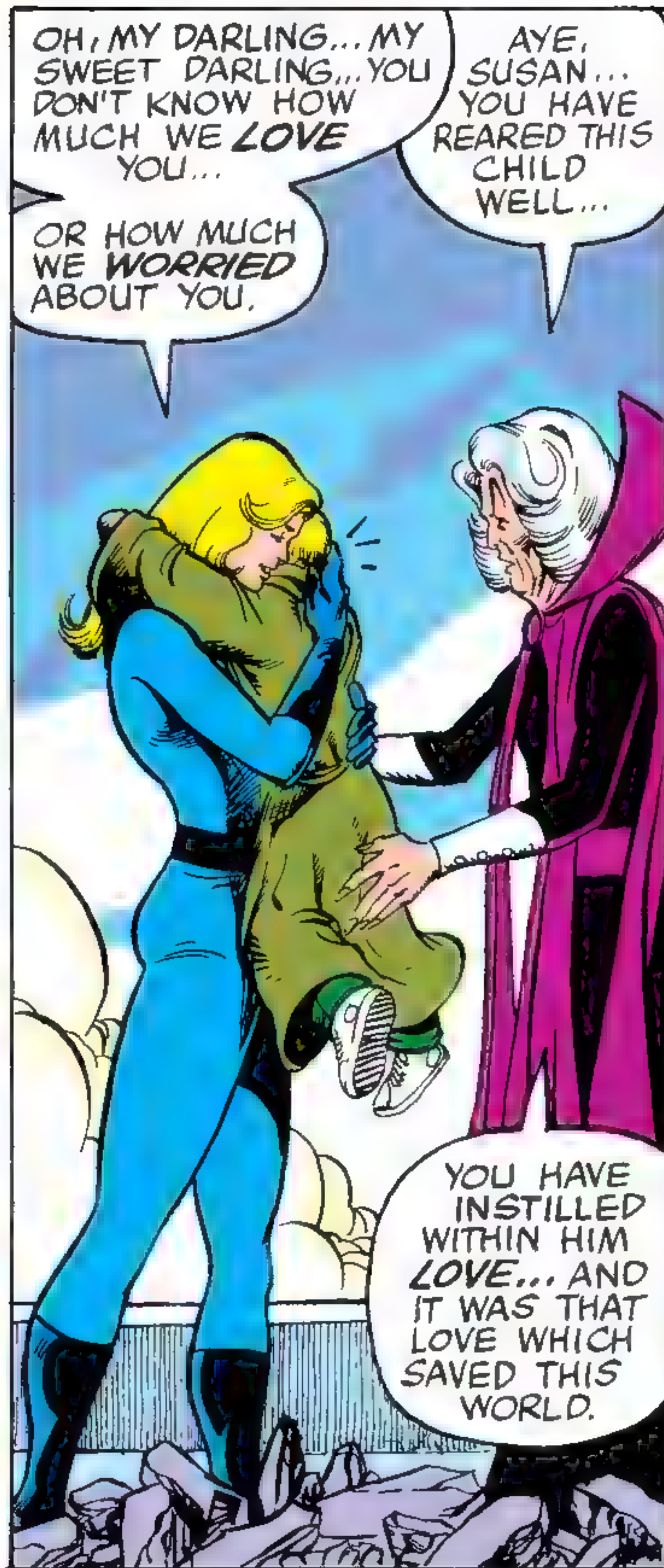
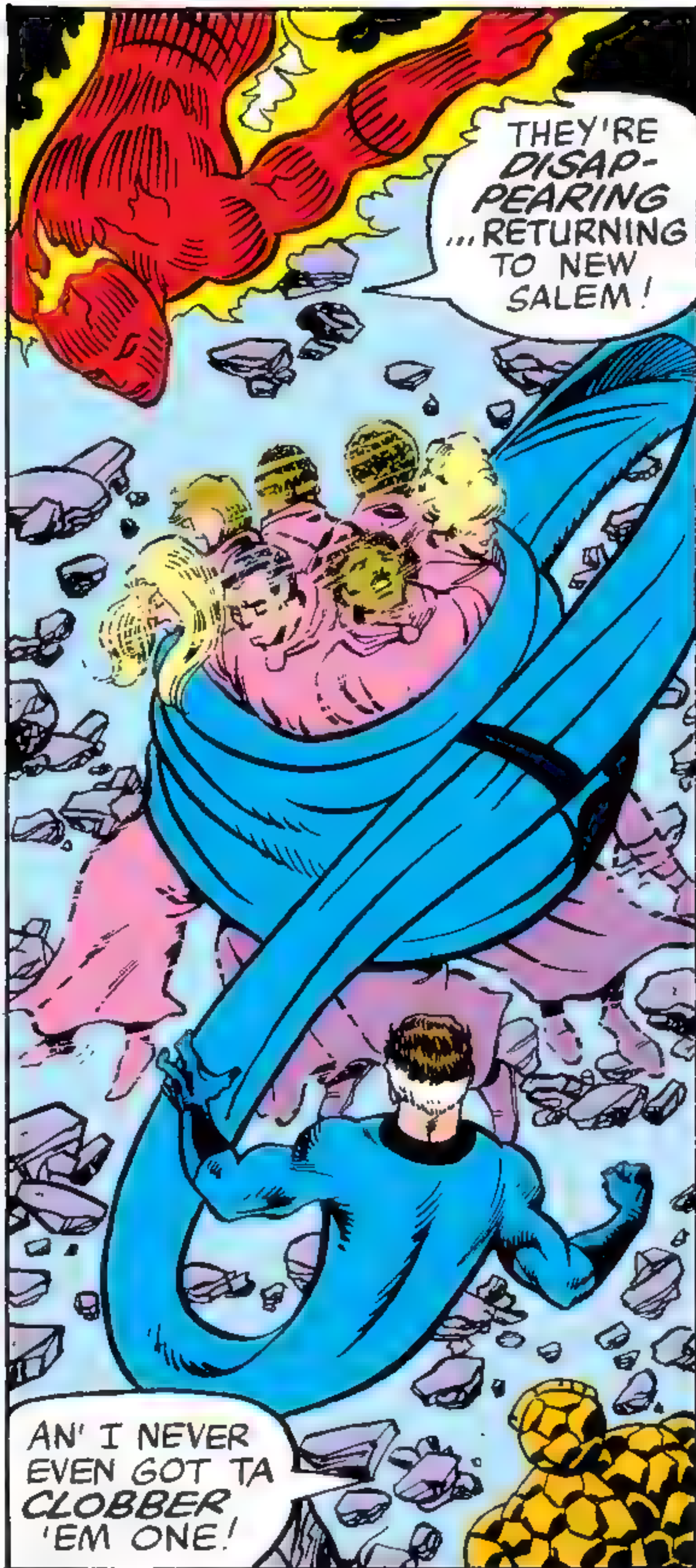
LET
ALL THY
POWERS
FADE!

LET ALL
MEMORY
OF THIS
DAY BE
ERASED
FROM
HUMAN-
KIND!

RETURN
YE ALL TO
NEW SALEM
WHERE NEVER
SHALL YE
VENTURE
FORTH
AGAIN!

BUT, MOST
OF ALL-- MY
SON... MY POOR,
FOOLISH SON:

YE ABOVE ALL
SHALL REMAIN IN
THE LAND BEYOND
BEYOND-- TILL THE
DAY WHEN ALL
THINE EVIL HAS
BEEN CLEANSED
FROM THY SOUL!



A GALLERY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S MOST FAMOUS FOES!

THE ENIGMATIC

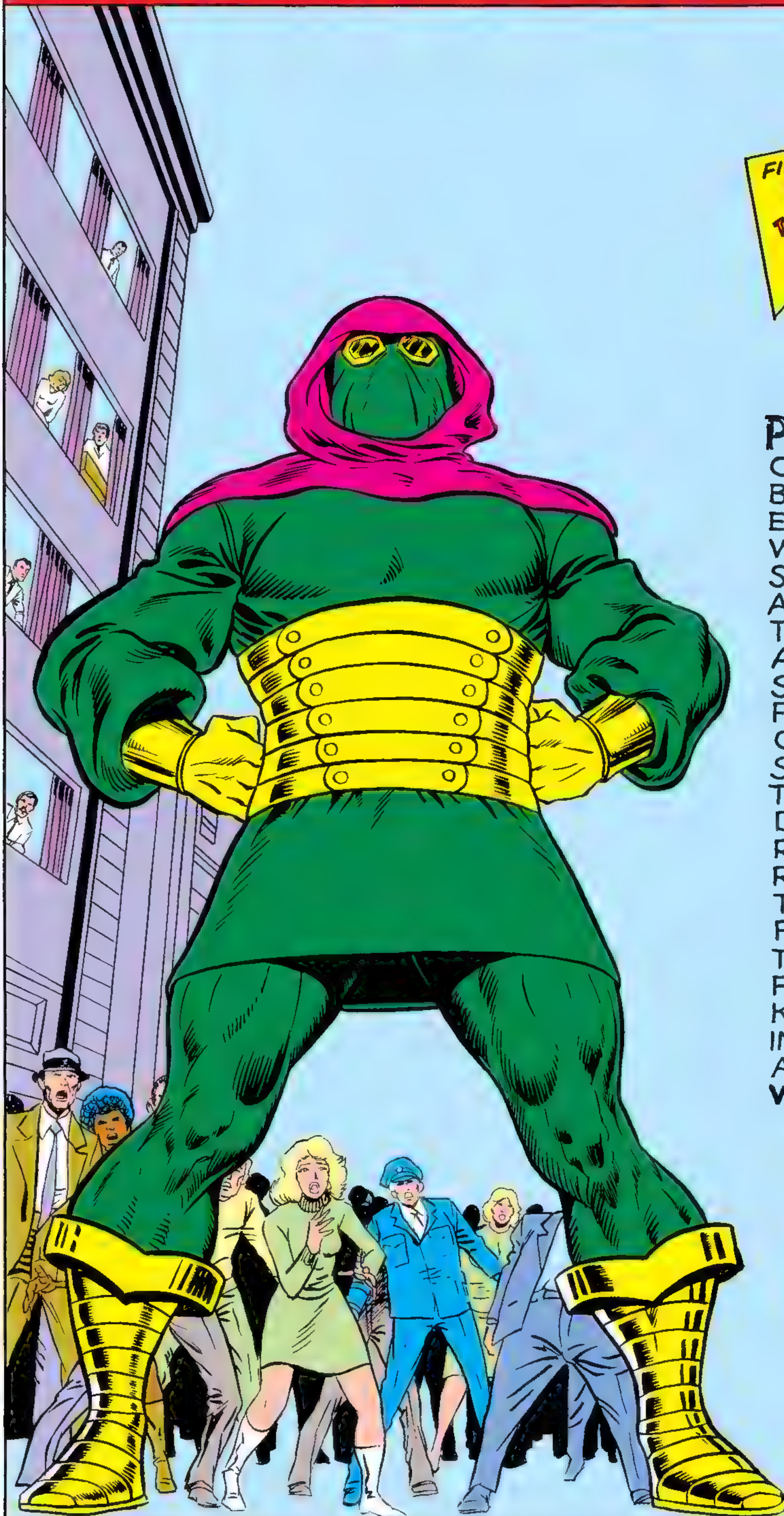
INVINCIBLE MAN!

FIRST APPEARED IN
The Fantastic Four

32

PERHAPS THE STRANGEST OF ALL THE F.F.'S FOES-- BECAUSE HE NEVER TRULY EXISTED! AT FIRST HE WAS THE FIENDISH SUPER-SKRULL, MASQUERADING AS DR. FRANKLIN STORM, THE FATHER OF JOHNNY AND SUE, IN A BIZARRE SCHEME TO PRESENT THE F.F. WITH A FOE THEY COULD NOT FIGHT. IT WAS A SCHEME WHICH ENDED IN THE TRAGIC DEATH OF DR. STORM. MORE RECENTLY, A HYPNOTIZED REED RICHARDS DONNED THE OMINOUS GARB, FORCED BY DR. DOOM TO TURN AGAINST HIS FRIENDS! NO ONE KNOWS WHEN THE INVINCIBLE MAN WILL APPEAR NEXT -- OR WHO HE WILL BE!

APPEARANCES:
FANTASTIC FOUR #32, 196



Writer Peter Gillis Artists: Keith Pollard and Pablo Marcos

A GALLERY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S MOST FAMOUS FOES!

ATTUMA

WARLORD OF
THE UNDERSEA
BARBARIANS

FIRST APPEARED IN
THE Fantastic Four

33



ATTUMA! LORD OF THE NOMADS THAT ROAM THE OCEAN FLOOR, FROM WHICH THE SUB-MARINER'S MIGHTY RACE SPRANG! **ATTUMA!** THE BARBARIAN KING STORMING THE GATES OF ATLANTIS ITSELF! **ATTUMA!** THE FIRST FOE FEARSOME ENOUGH TO FORCE THE FANTASTIC FOUR TO UNITE WITH THEIR LONG-TIME ENEMY, PRINCE NAMOR THE **SUB-MARINER--** AGAINST A MENACE WHO, OUT OF SHEER SAVAGERY, WOULD TEAR DOWN ALL CIVILIZATIONS ABOVE OR BENEATH THE WAVES, AND BUILD HIMSELF A THRONE OUT OF THE SKULLS OF HOMO SAPIENS AND HOMO MERMANNUS ALIKE!

APPEARANCES:
FANTASTIC FOUR #33
FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #3
AVENGERS #26, 27
TALES OF SUSPENSE #66
TALES TO ASTONISH #65, 88, 89, 91
SUB-MARINER #4, 31, 36, 37
DEFENDERS #7, 8

A GALLERY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S MOST FAMOUS FOES!

**THE MAN
CALLED...**

GIDEON!

FIRST APPEARED IN
The Fantastic Four

34

GREGORY HUNGERFORD GIDEON WAS ONE OF THE WEATHIEST MEN ALIVE, WHEN, IN A BID FOR ULTIMATE POWER, HE DEVISED AN INTRICATE SCHEME TO DESTROY THE FANTASTIC FOUR! THE ALMOST FOOLPROOF PLOT WAS THWARTED BY THE COURAGE OF A YOUNG BOY -- HIS SON! GIDEON SEEMED A CHANGED MAN -- UNTIL A RADIATION ACCIDENT DOOMED HIM TO A SLOW DEATH, FORCING HIM TO WEAR AN EXO-SKELETON TO SURVIVE AT ALL! IN HIS DESPAIR, HE LASHED OUT AT THE F.F. AGAIN -- UNTIL DEATH STILLED HIS MENACE -- AND HIS TRAGEDY -- FOR ALL TIME.

APPEARANCES:
FANTASTIC FOUR #34, 134, 135



A GALLERY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S MOST FAMOUS FOES!

The
DREADFUL

DRAGON MAN!

FIRST APPEARED IN
The Fantastic Four

35

ORIGINALLY THE ANDROID CREATION OF STATE UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR NATHAN GILBERT, DRAGON MAN WAS GIVEN ALCHEMICAL LIFE BY THE FIEND **DIABLO**, TO ATTACK TWO OF STATE U.'S MOST FAMED ALUMNI, REED RICHARDS AND BEN GRIMM! FLYING, FLAME-BREATHING, STRONG BEYOND BELIEF, THE CREATURE CAN BE AS GENTLE AS A CHILD-- BUT IS EVERY BIT AS UNPREDICTABLE! THE F.F. ONCE NEARLY ADOPTED HIM AS THEIR HOUSE PET-- BUT MOST OFTEN HE HAS BEEN ENSLAVED BY VILLAINS AS A HAPLESS YET **DEADLY** PAWN!

APPEARANCES:
FANTASTIC FOUR #35, 44,
45, 46, 47, 134, 135
AVENGERS #41, 42
SUB-MARINER #15

A GALLERY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S MOST FAMOUS FOES!

The
FEARSOME

FRIGHTFUL FOUR

FIRST APPEARED IN
THE **Fantastic
Four**

36



THE WINGLESS WIZARD, MASTER OF ANTI-GRAVITY! THE **SANDMAN**, ABLE TO CHANGE HIS FORM FROM ELUSIVE SAND TO LETHAL STONE! THE **TRAPSTER**, WITH A THOUSAND WAYS TO KILL A MAN! AND MADAME **MEDUSA**, OF THE LIVING HAIR! TOGETHER THEY FORMED THE EVIL COUNTERPART TO THE F.F.! AND THOUGH MEDUSA LATER LEFT, TO BE REPLACED BY THUNDRA AND THEN THE BRUTE, THESE VILLAINS REMAIN THE MOST PERSISTENT AND PERNICIOUS OF ALL THE F.F.'S FOES!

APPEARANCES:
FANTASTIC FOUR #36, 38,
41, 42, 43, 94, 129, 130,
133, 148, 177, 178, 179.
THOR #116
MARVEL TEAM-UP #2

A GALLERY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S MOST FAMOUS FOES!

QUASIMODO

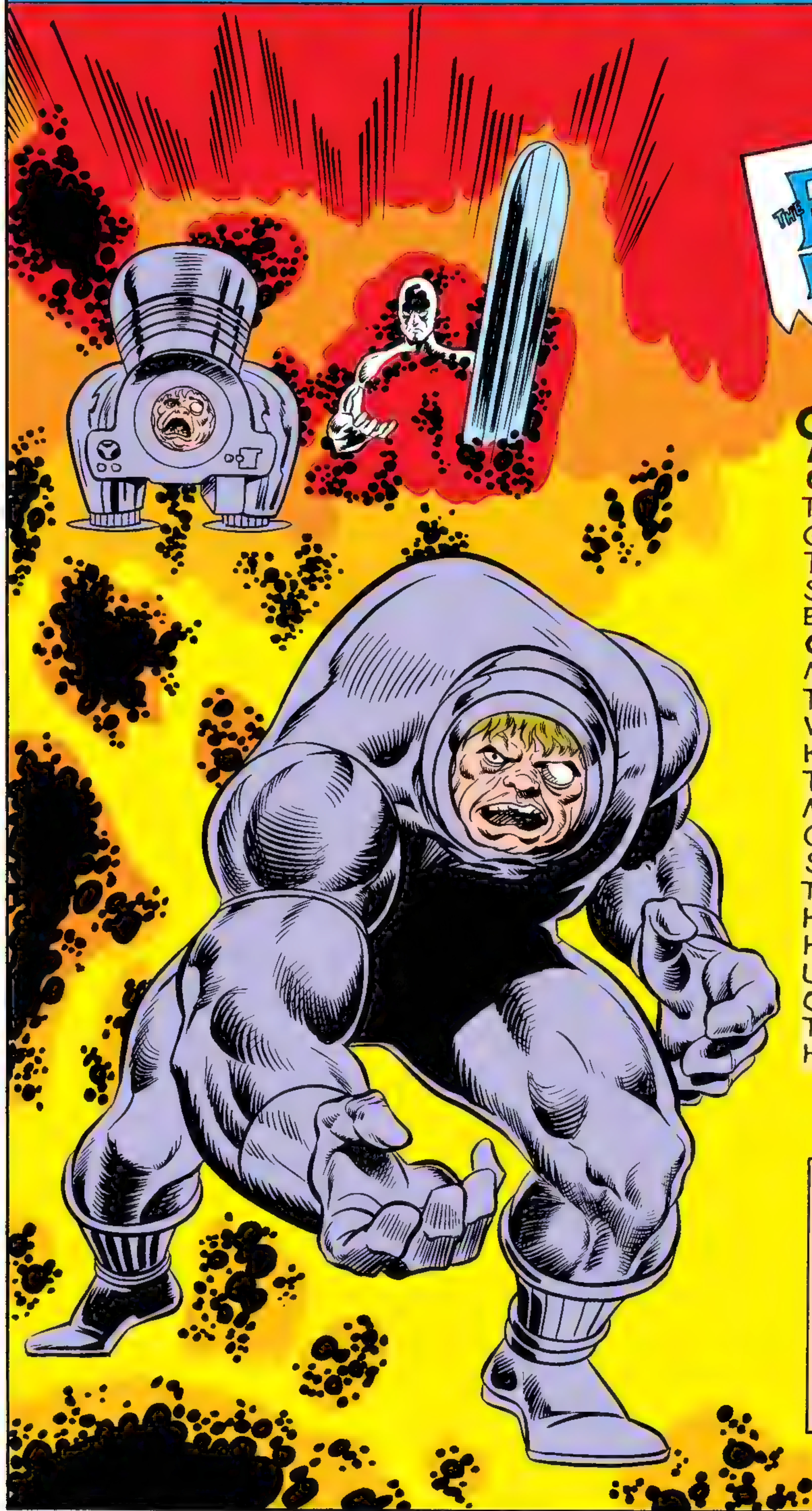
THE LIVING
COMPUTER!

FIRST APPEARED IN
**The Fantastic
Four ANNUAL**

4

CHRISTENED QUASI-MOTIVATIONAL DESTRUCT ORGAN BY HIS CREATOR, THE MAD THINKER, AND GIVEN LIVING FORM BY THE MERCY OF THE SILVER SURFER, THE ENTITY KNOWN AS **QUASIMODO** IS EVERY MAN'S NIGHTMARE OF THE COMPUTER WHICH WOULD ENSLAVE MANKIND! WITH HIS POWER TO CONTROL ALL MACHINES, THIS GROTESQUE BEING HAS SOUGHT HIS REVENGE TIME AND AGAIN ON THE HUMAN RACE, WHOM HE BLAMES FOR HIS UGLINESS, WHICH IS ONLY THE MIRROR OF THE TWISTED EVIL OF HIS SOUL!

APPEARANCES:
FANTASTIC FOUR
ANNUAL #4, 5
FANTASTIC FOUR #201
AVENGERS #135
X-MEN #48
CAPTAIN MARVEL #7
AMAZING ADVENTURES #14
MARVEL TEAM-UP #22
NOVA #25



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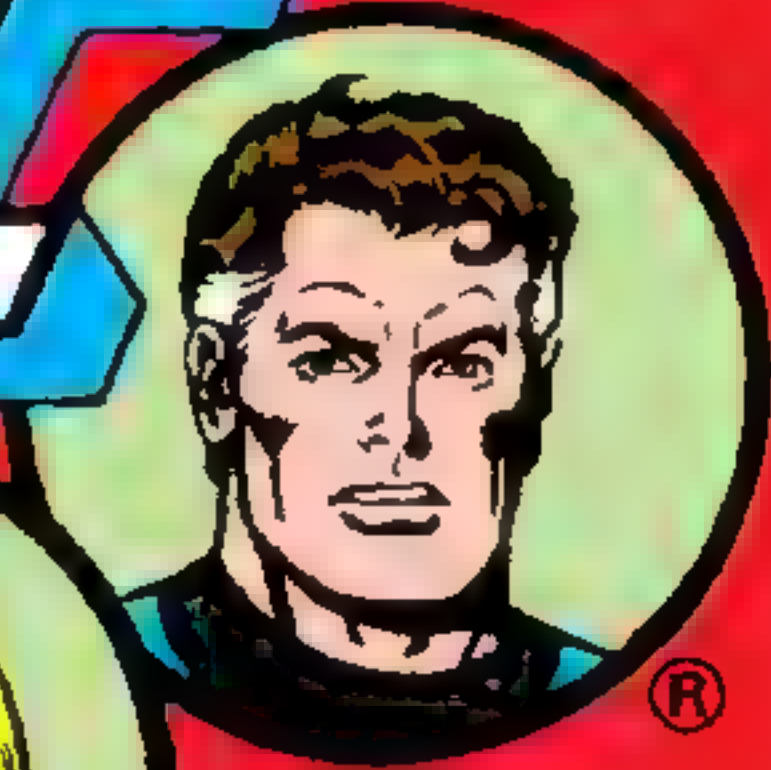
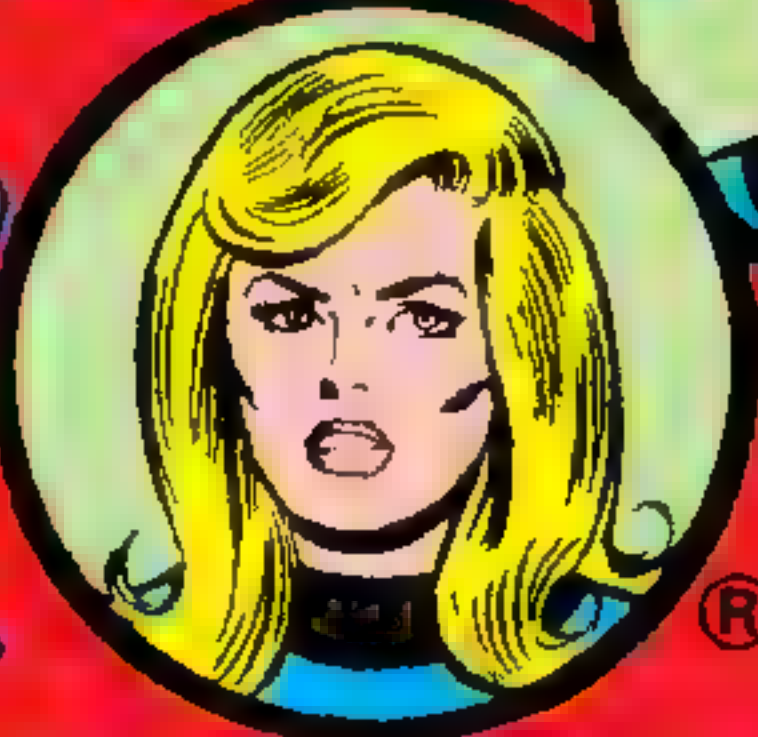
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FANTASTIC FOUR®



HE'S
BACK!

BLASTAAR
THE LIVING BOMBBURST!



WILSON/RUBINSTEIN

Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

MARV WOLFMAN
WRITER / EDITOR

JOHN BYRNE & JOE SINNOTT
ARTISTS

JOE ROSEN
LETTERER

C. GAFFORD
COLORIST

JIM SHOOTER
CONSULTING EDITOR

BLASTAAR!

THERE'S NOT MUCH WE CAN ADD TO THE SCENE BELOW,
SO LET'S START THE STORY NOW!!

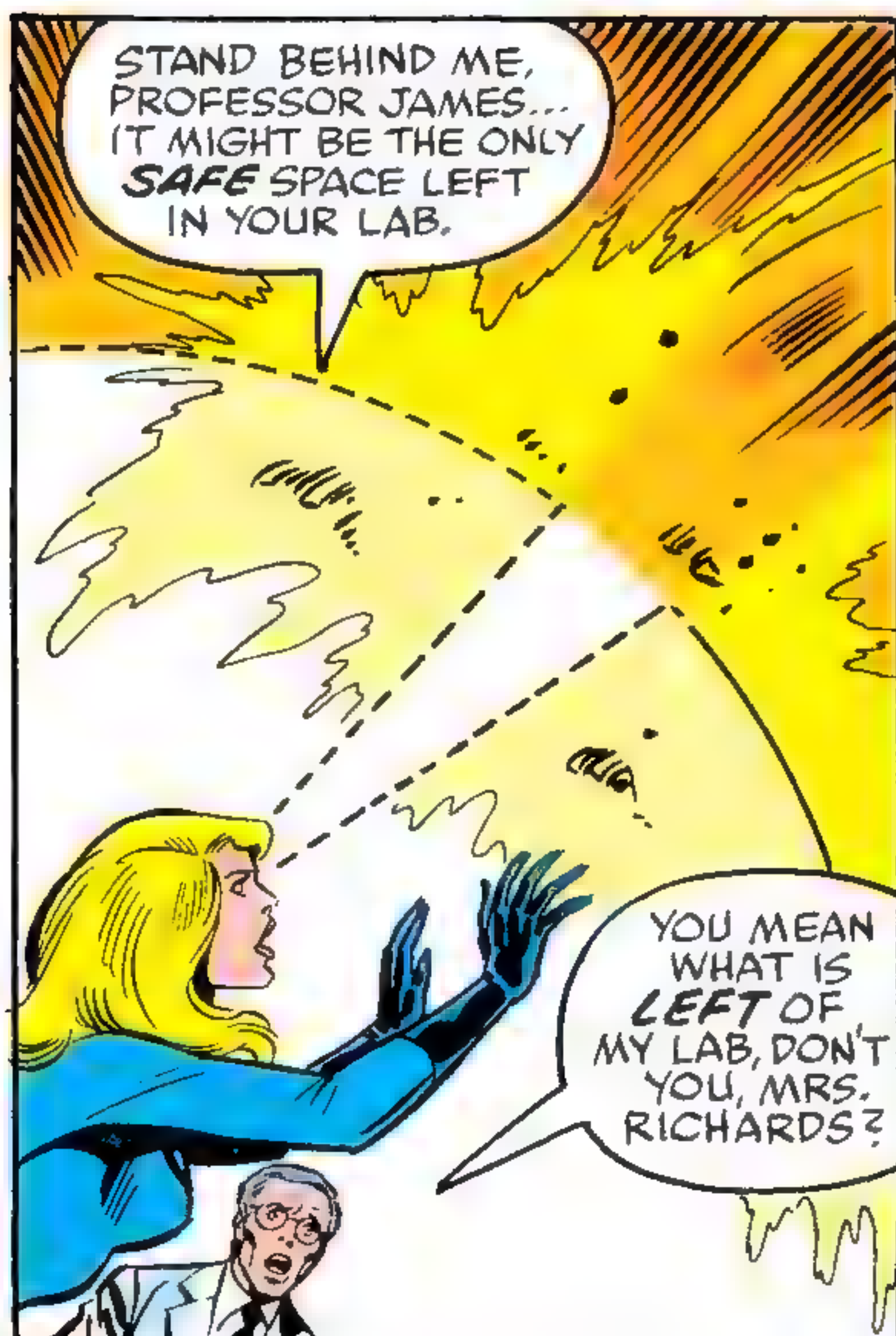
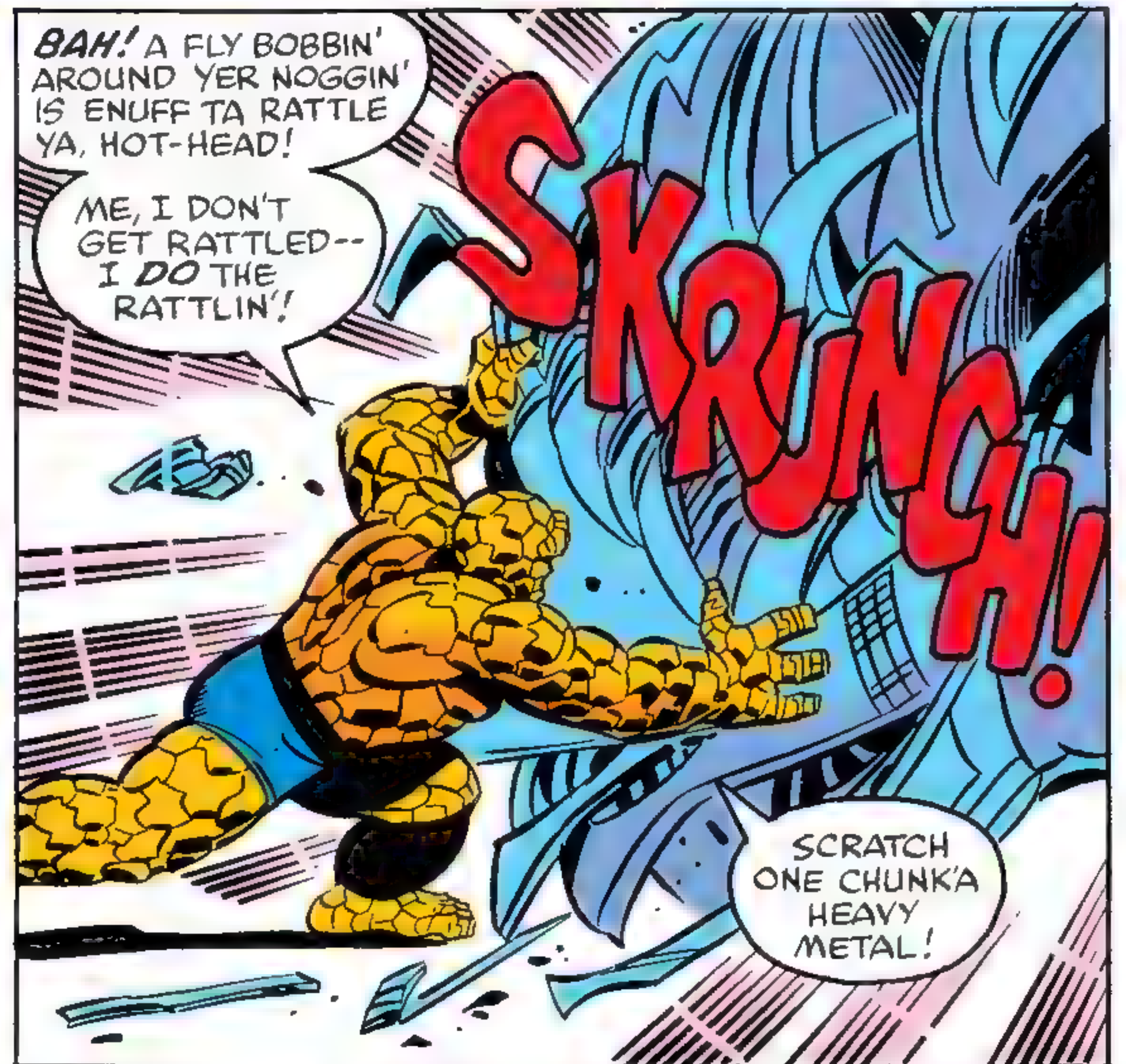
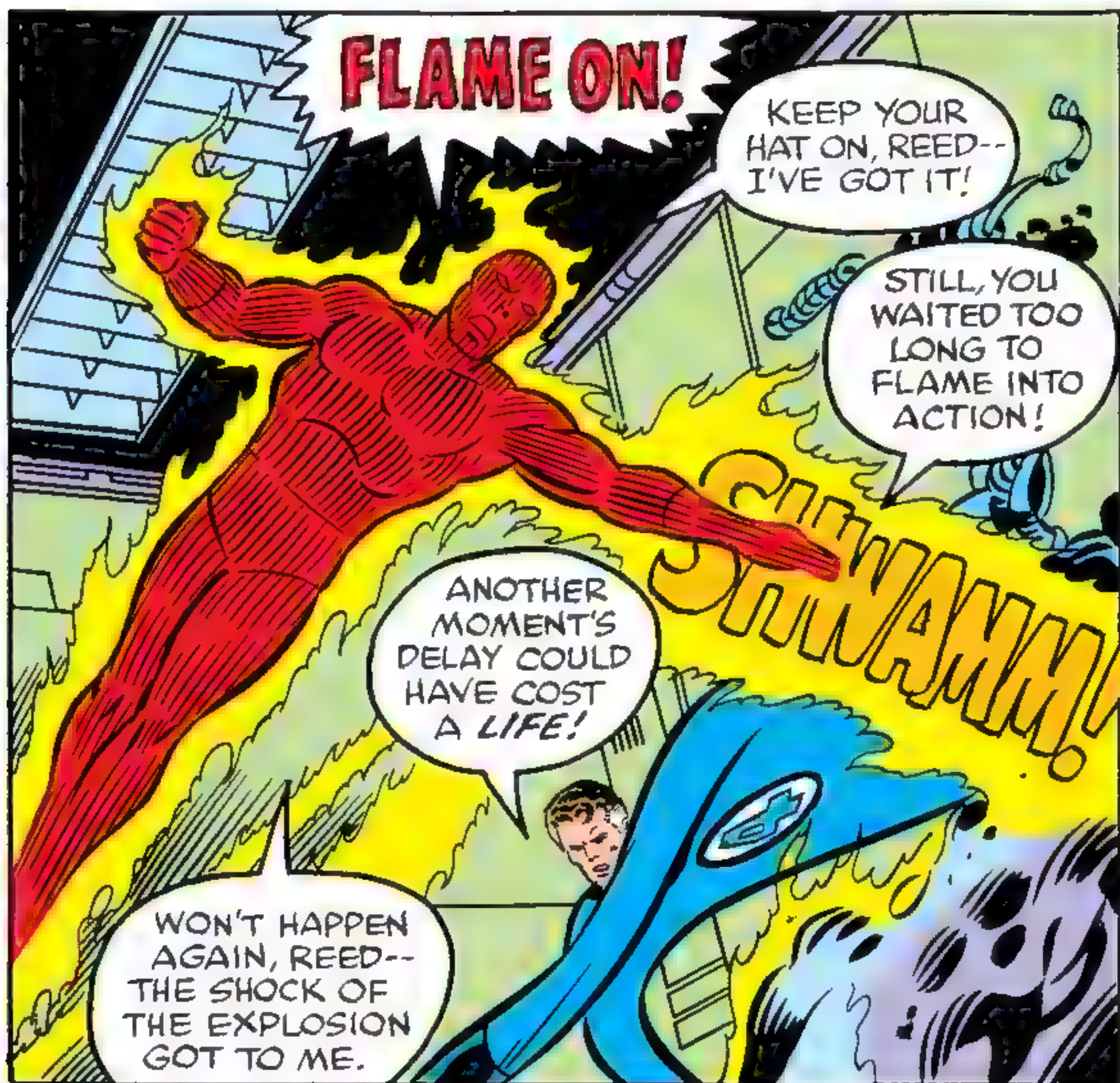
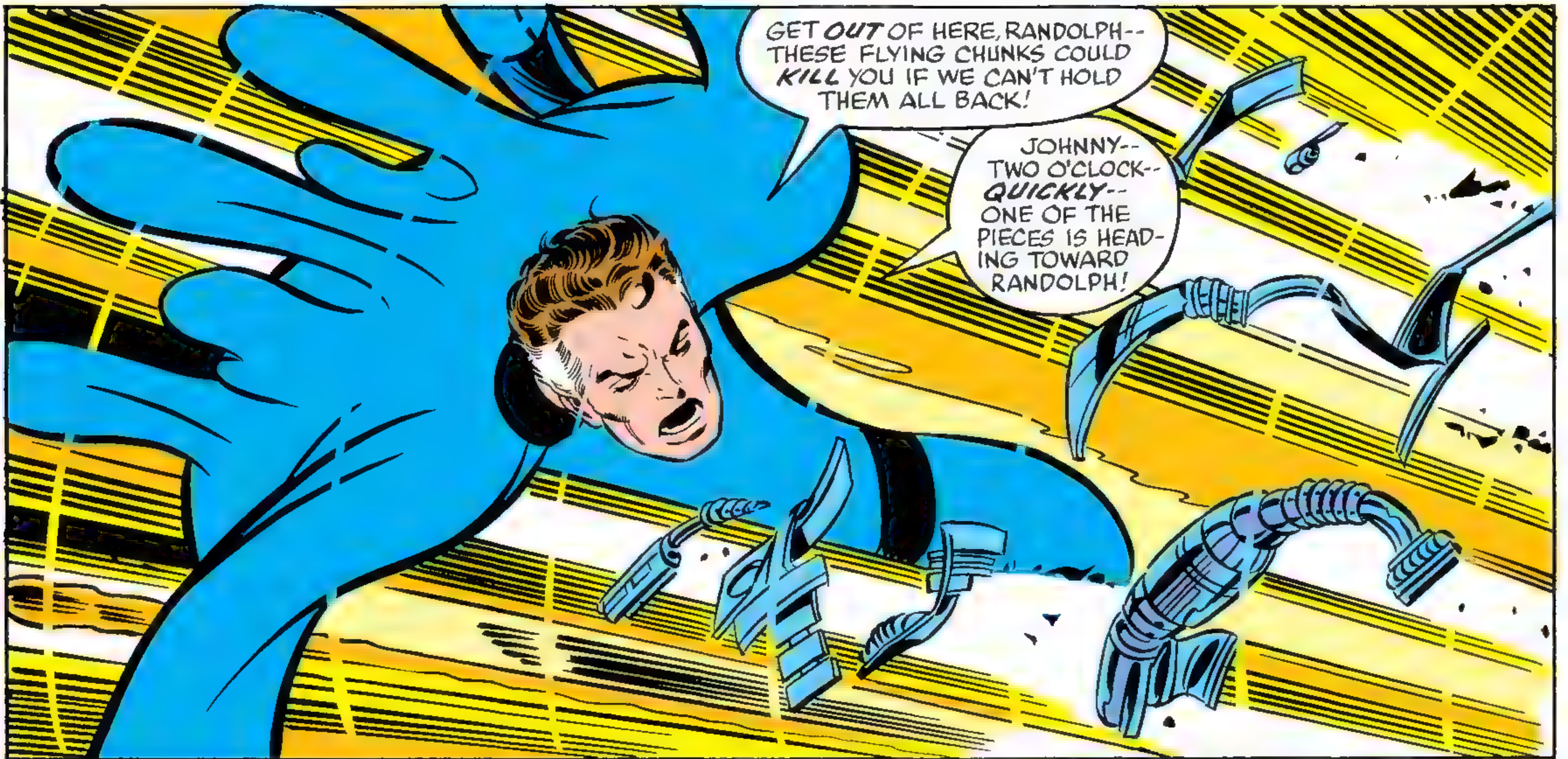
SUE! BEN!
JOHNNY!
YOU KNOW
WHAT WE HAVE
TO DO--SO
LET'S MOVE
IT!

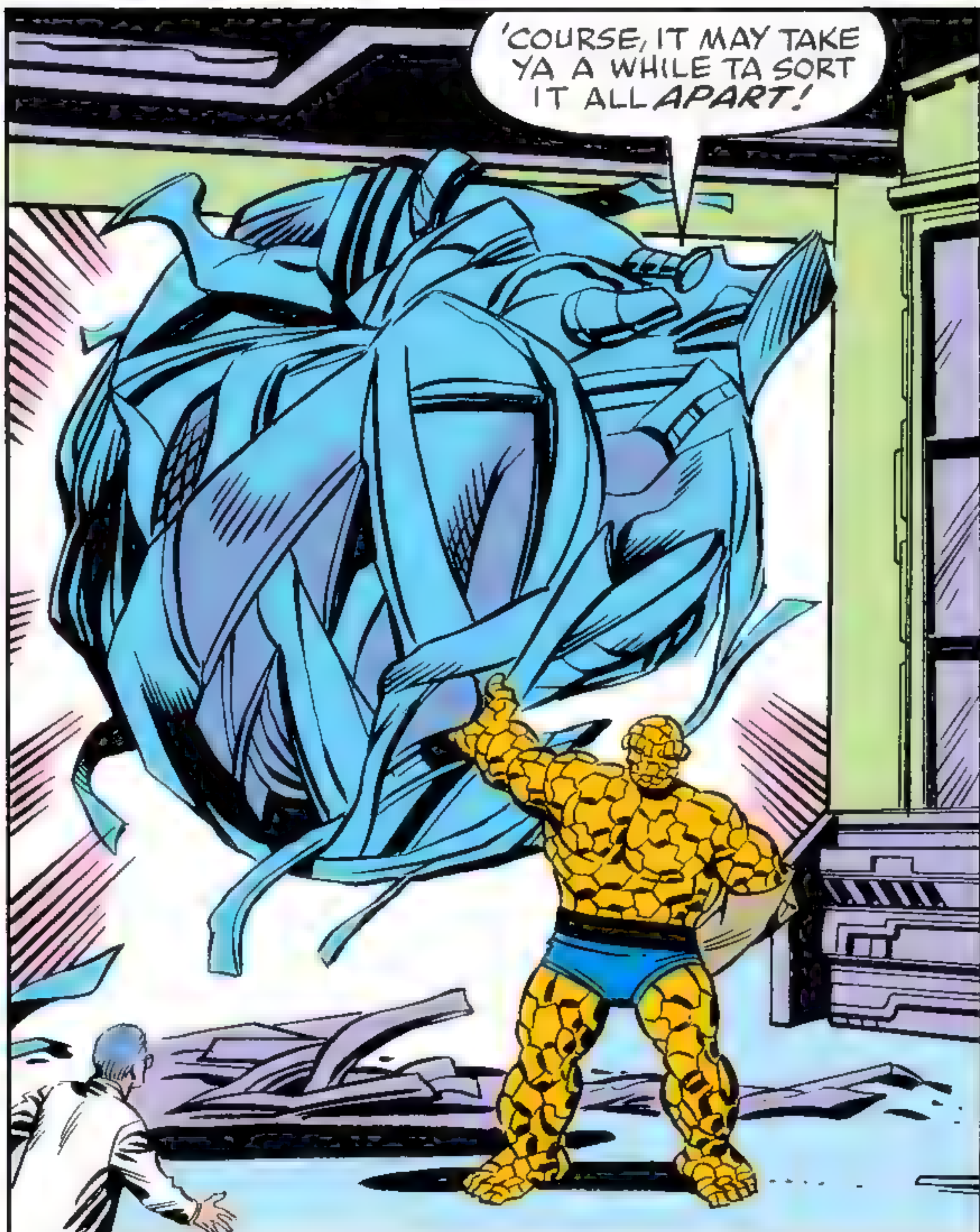
THAT DEBRIS
HAS TO BE
CONTAINED--
AND QUICKLY!

OH, MY
HEAVENS--
COMPLICORD
PLUS IS SHORT-
CIRCUITING!

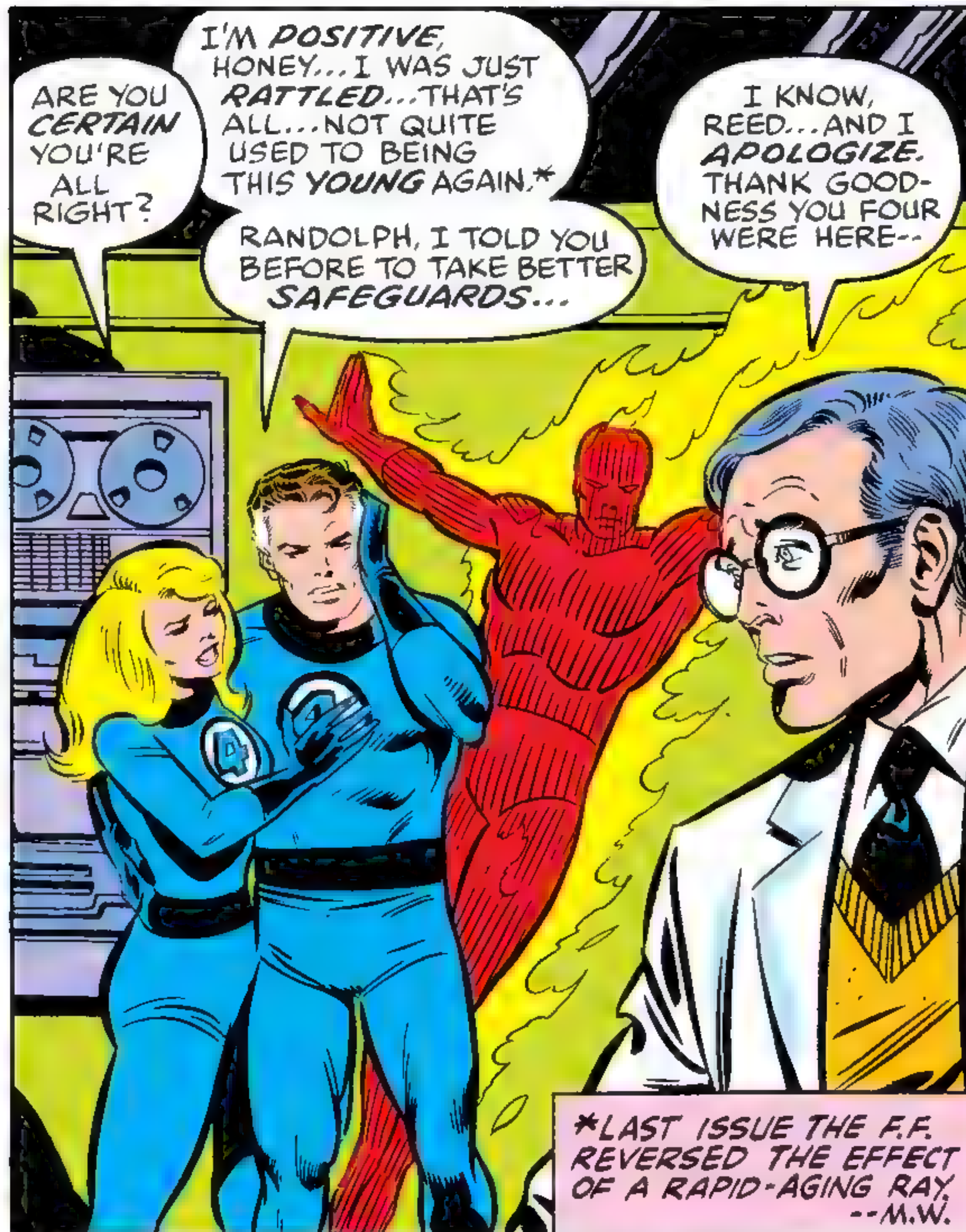
SKR-RAH!!!

LF642





'COURSE, IT MAY TAKE YA A WHILE TA SORT IT ALL APART!



ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU'RE ALL RIGHT?

I'M POSITIVE, HONEY... I WAS JUST RATTLED... THAT'S ALL... NOT QUITE USED TO BEING THIS YOUNG AGAIN.*

RANDOLPH, I TOLD YOU BEFORE TO TAKE BETTER SAFEGUARDS...

I KNOW, REED... AND I APOLOGIZE. THANK GOODNESS YOU FOUR WERE HERE--

*LAST ISSUE THE F.F. REVERSED THE EFFECT OF A RAPID-AGING RAY --M.W.



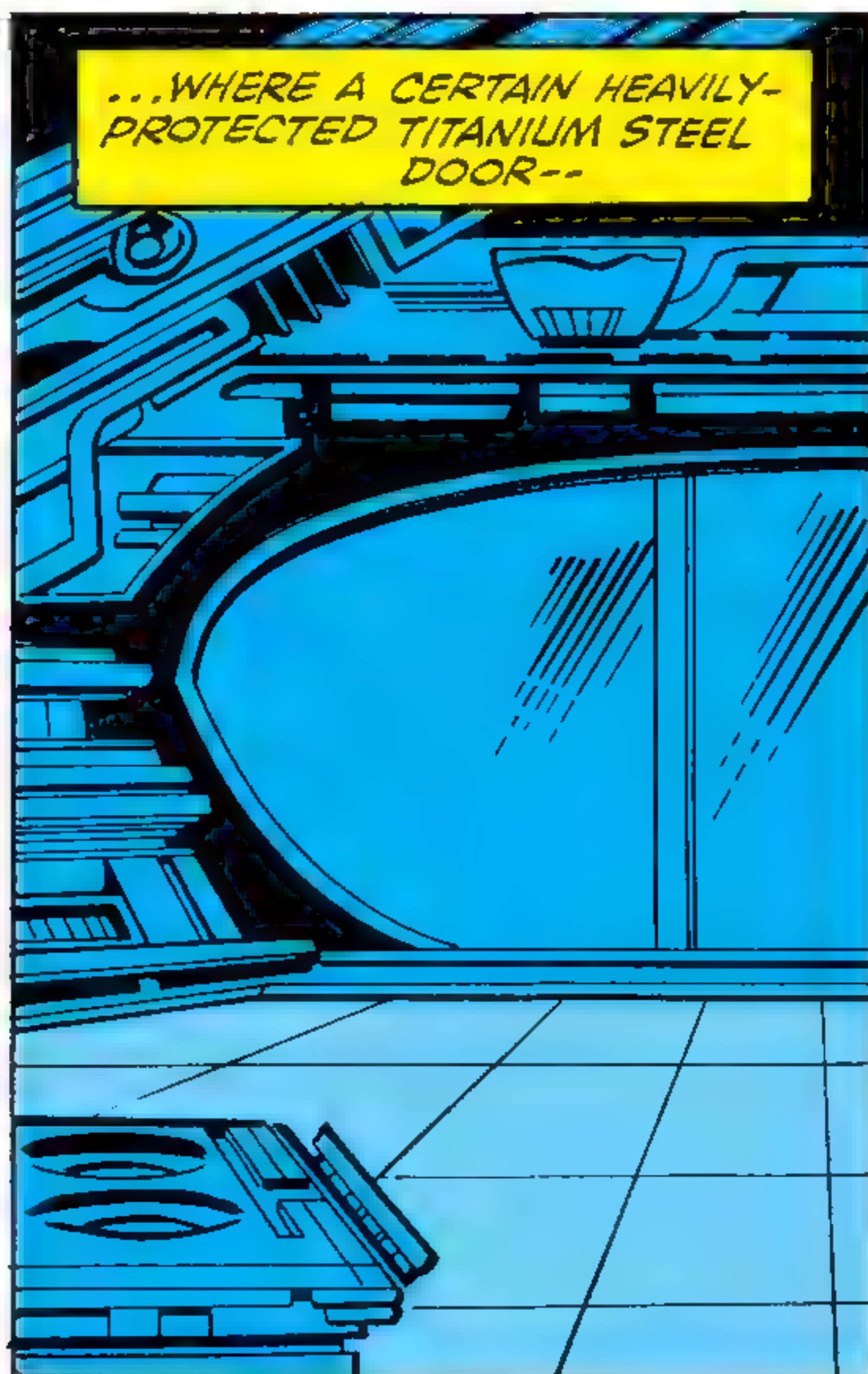
WHO KNOWS WHAT HORRIBLE THINGS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED HERE WITHOUT YOU. I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT COULD HAVE CAUSED THE COMPUTER TO FEED-BACK LIKE IT DID.

LOOK, JUST GO EASY FROM NOW ON... YOUR WORK IS DANGEROUS... PERHAPS TOO DANGEROUS FOR ANY PRIVATE LAB.

YES, REED... I'LL GO MORE SLOWLY...



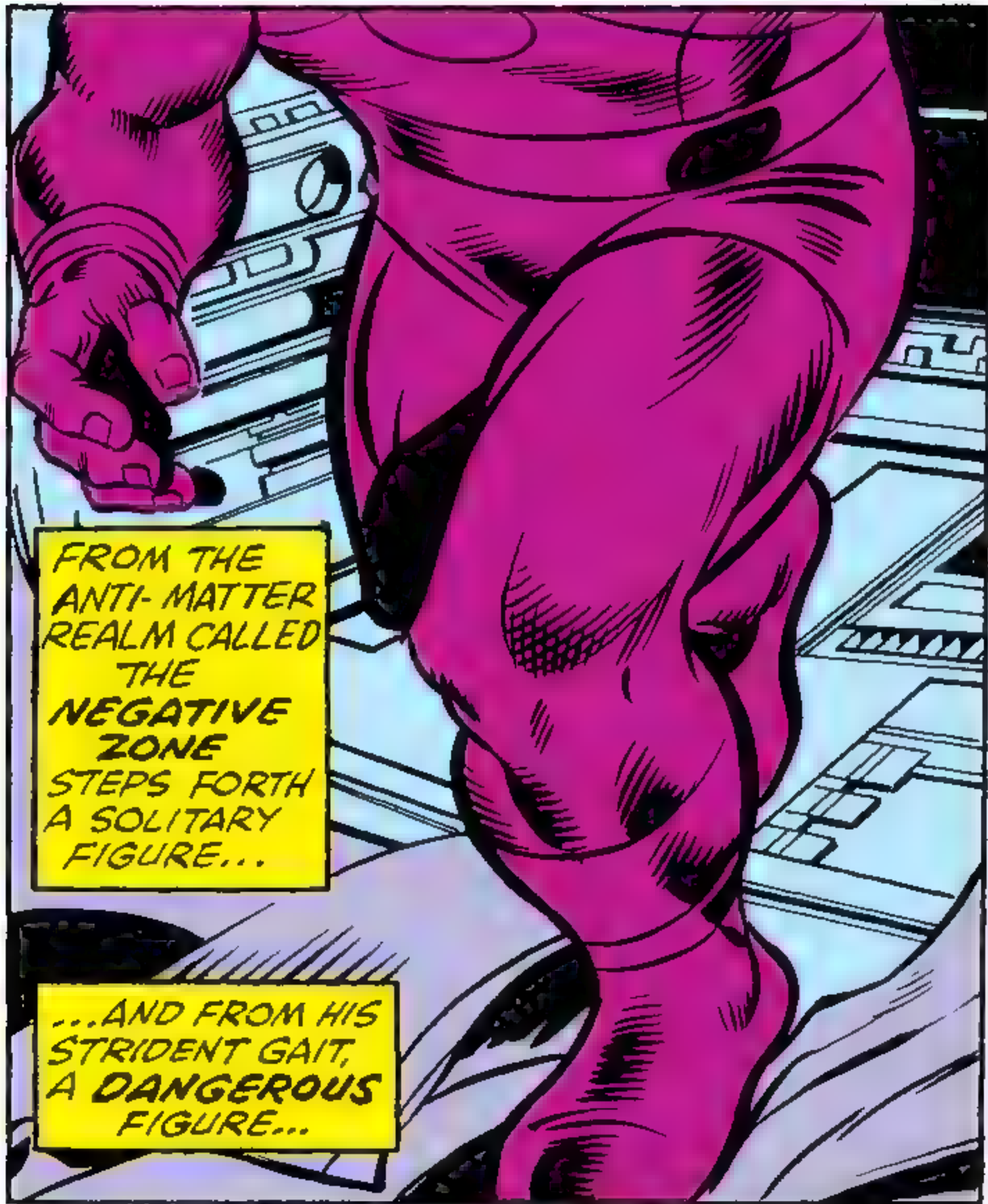
WHILE THE F.F. ASSIST PROFESSOR RANDOLPH JAMES IN HIS CLEAN-UP, LET US RETURN TO THE BAXTER BUILDING...



...WHERE A CERTAIN HEAVILY-PROTECTED TITANIUM STEEL DOOR--



--SUDDENLY RUPTURES!



FROM THE ANTI-MATTER REALM CALLED THE **NEGATIVE ZONE** STEPS FORTH A SOLITARY FIGURE...

...AND FROM HIS STRIDENT GAIT, A **DANGEROUS** FIGURE...

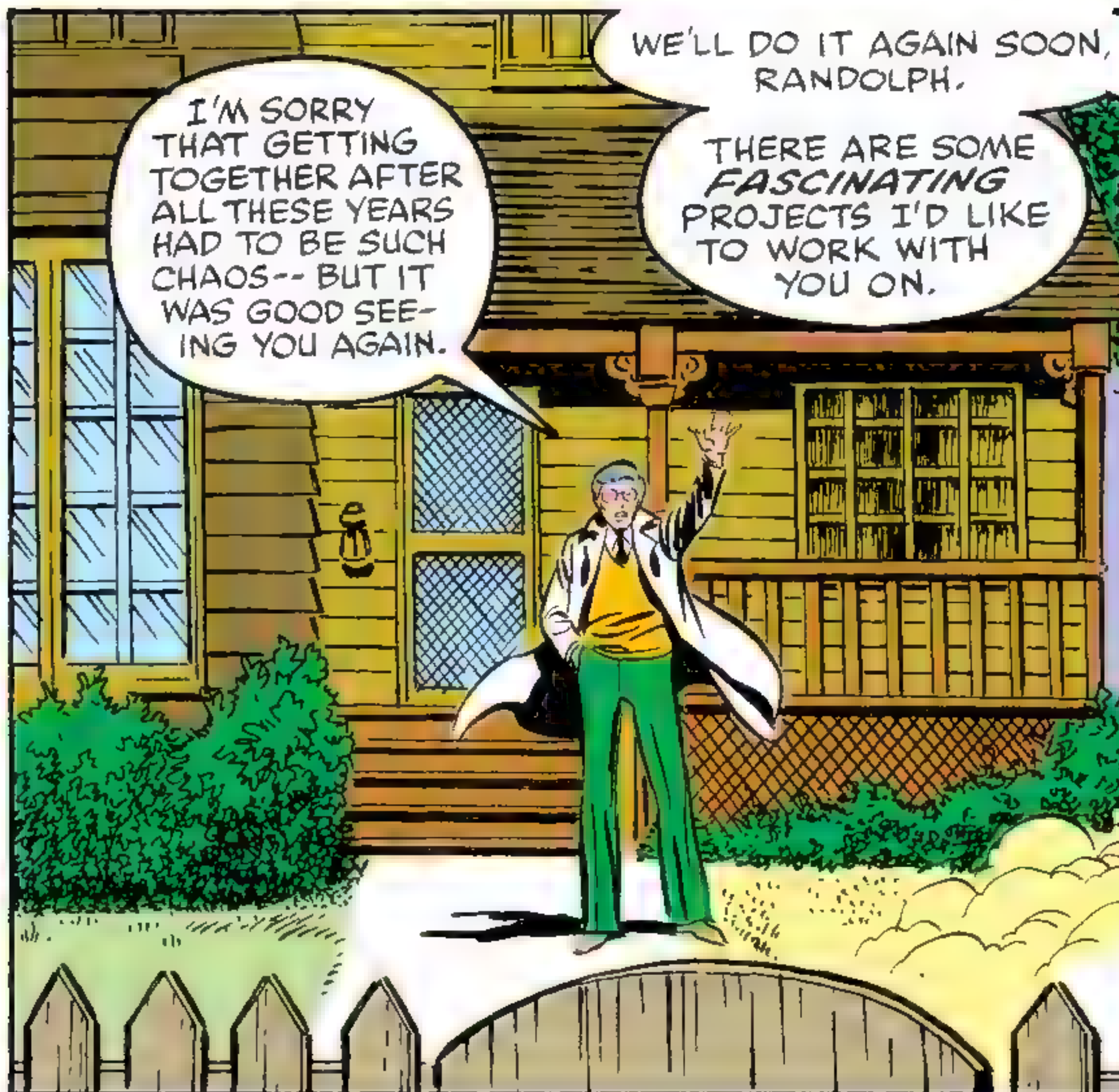
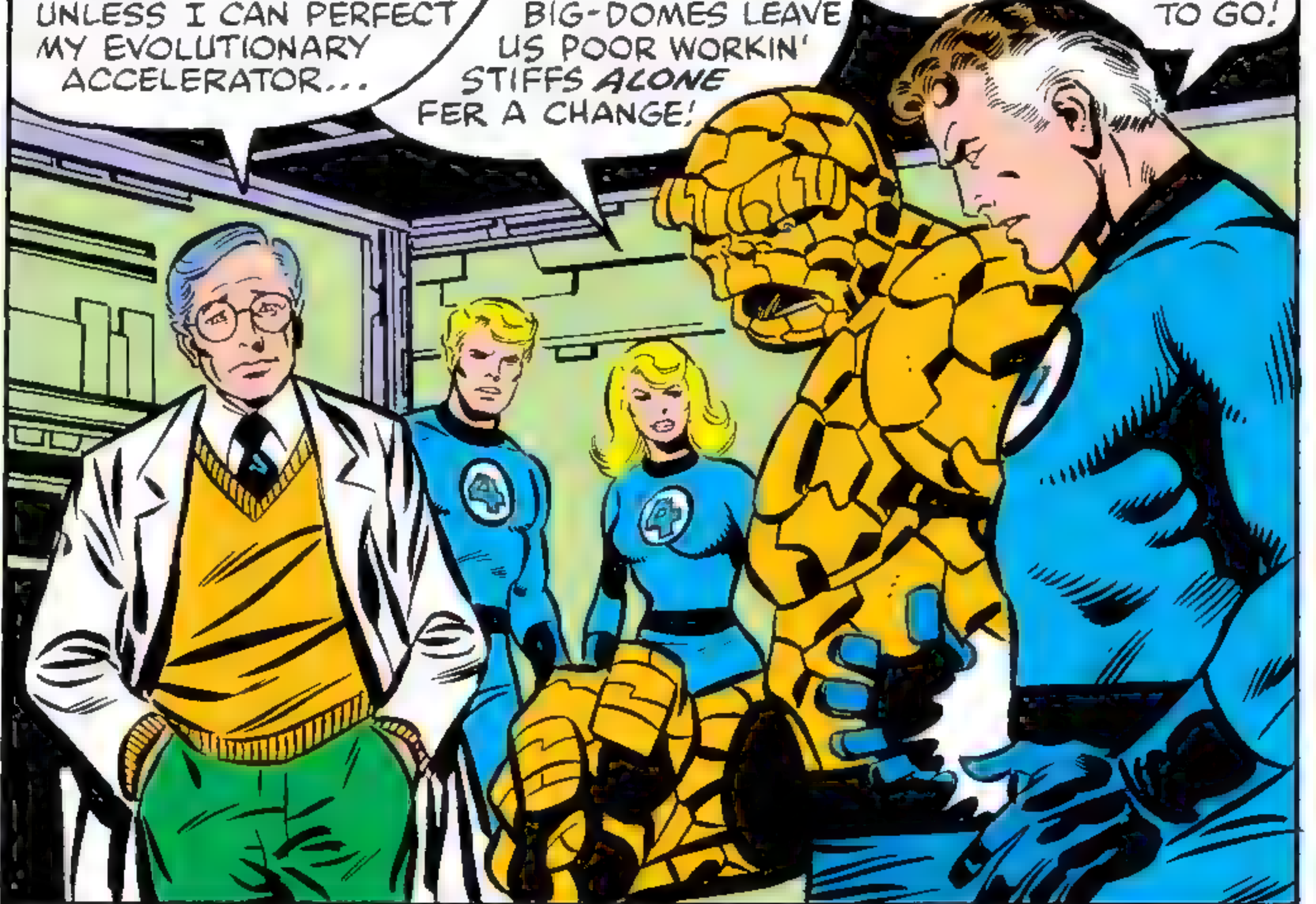
MEANWHILE...

HAVE COST ME YEARS, REED... YEARS I DOUBT MANKIND MAY HAVE UNLESS I CAN PERFECT MY EVOLUTIONARY ACCELERATOR...

THIS SET-BACK MAY TRYIN' TA CHANGE US-- WHY DON'T YOU BIG-DOMES LEAVE US POOR WORKIN' STIFFS ALONE FER A CHANGE!

SHEESH! EVERYONE'S TRYIN' TA CHANGE US-- WHY DON'T YOU BIG-DOMES LEAVE US POOR WORKIN' STIFFS ALONE FER A CHANGE!

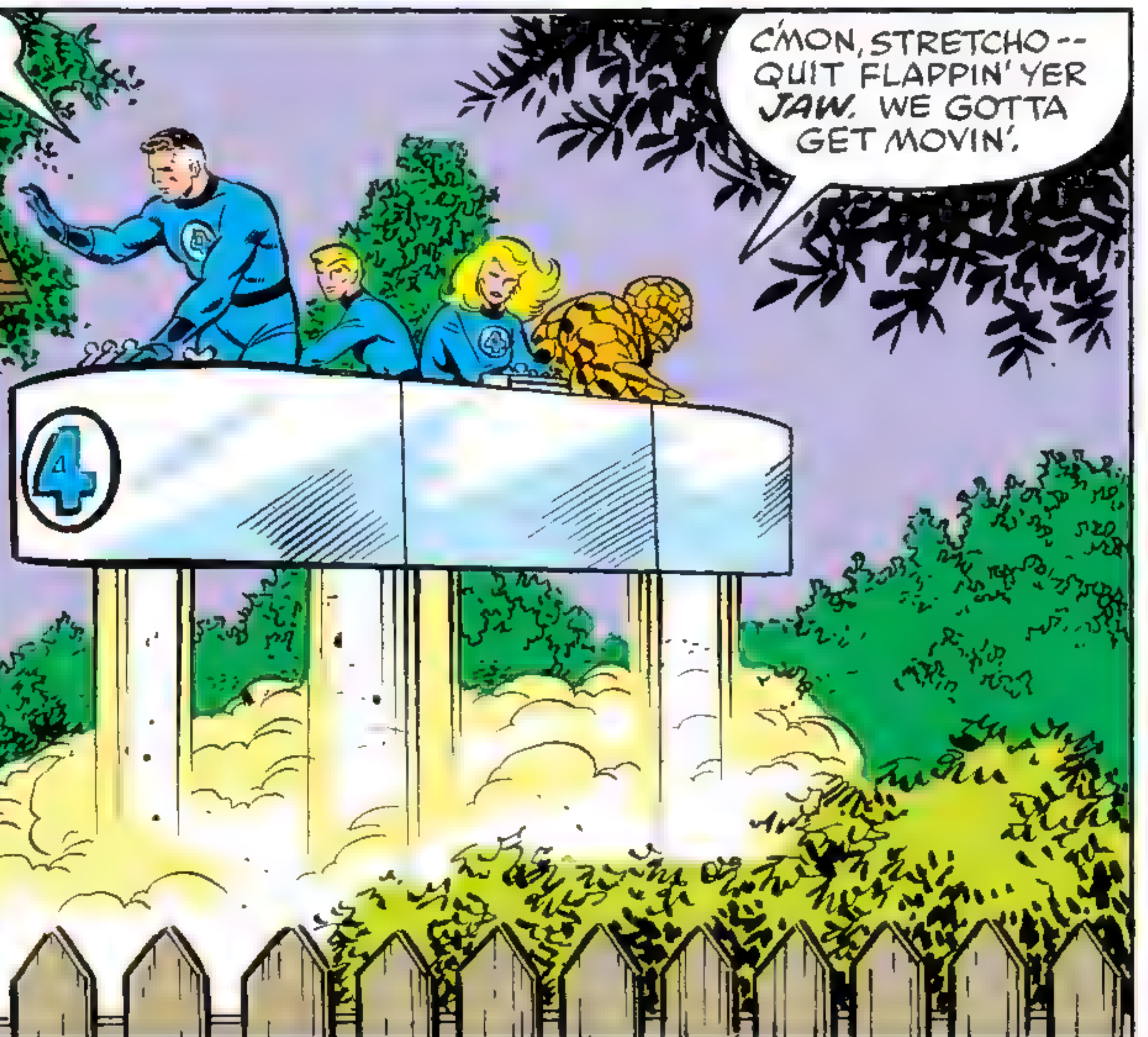
HOLD IT, BEN-- SOMETHING'S **WRONG**-- GETTING A **PRIORITY ONE** SIGNAL ON MY BELT-BUCKLE MONITOR... WE'VE GOT TO GO!



I'M SORRY THAT GETTING TOGETHER AFTER ALL THESE YEARS HAD TO BE SUCH CHAOS-- BUT IT WAS GOOD SEEING YOU AGAIN.

WE'LL DO IT AGAIN SOON, RANDOLPH.

THERE ARE SOME **FASCINATING** PROJECTS I'D LIKE TO WORK WITH YOU ON.



C'MON, STRETCHO-- QUIT FLAPPIN' YER JAW. WE GOTTA GET MOVIN'.



GOODBYE, REED, AND THOUGH YOUR ADVICE MAY BE CORRECT, I **CAN'T** STOP MY WORK--

--NOT WHEN MANKIND'S FUTURE MAY **DEPEND** ON IT.

YOU OUGHTTA CARE ABOUT YER OWN FUTURE, CREEP--



--'CAUSE YOU JUST MAY NOT HAVE ANY.

HUH? WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

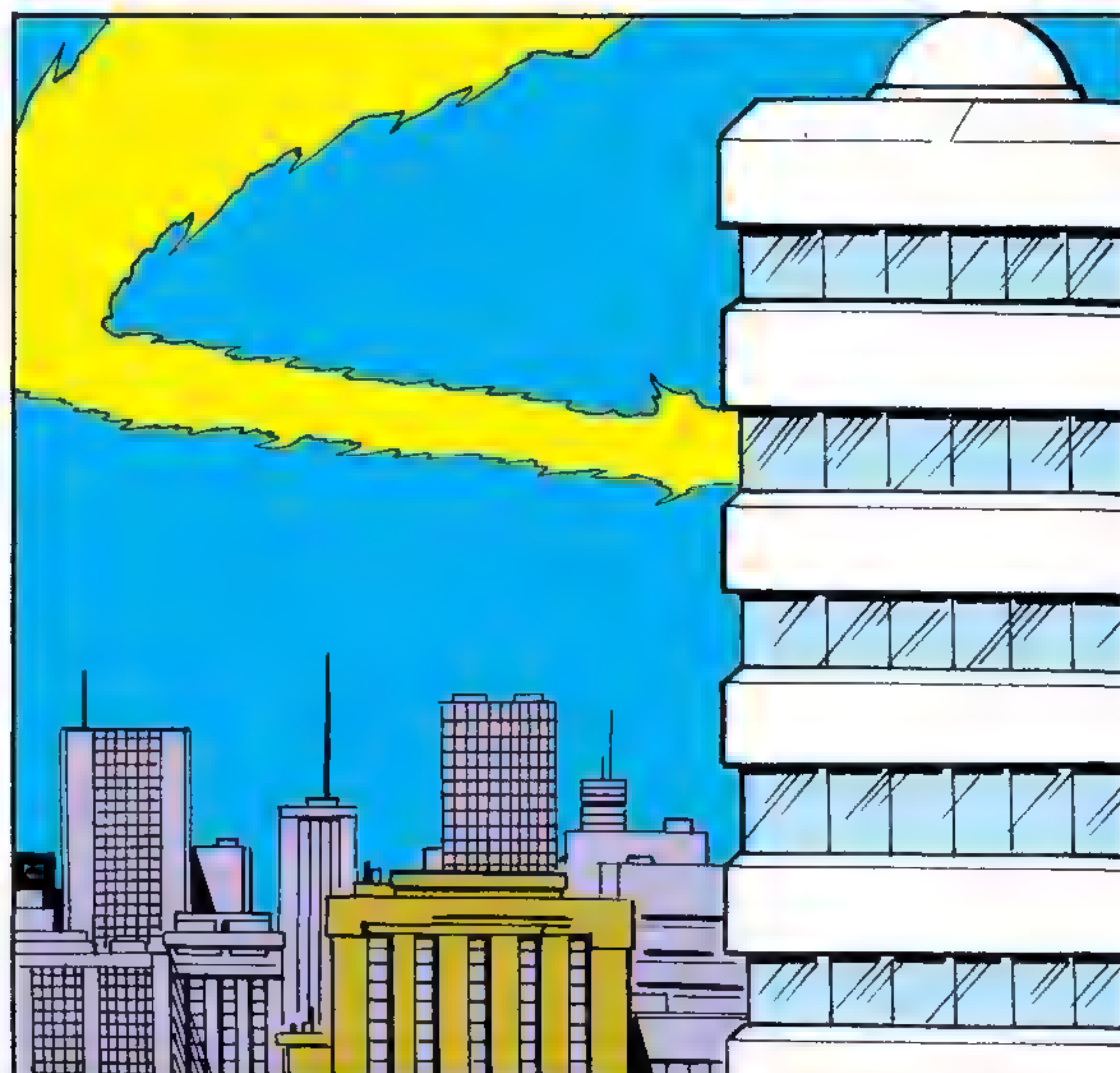
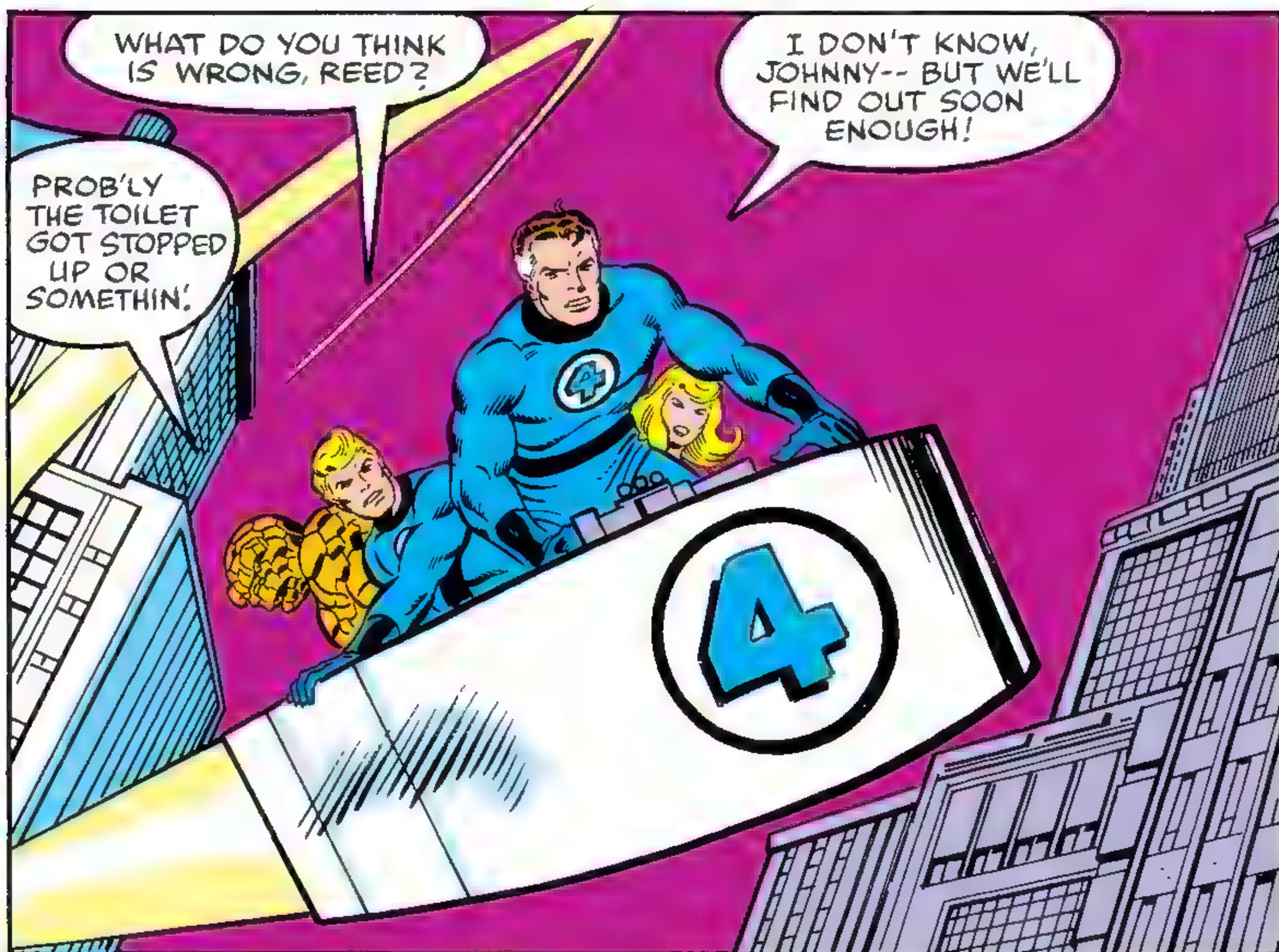
WANT? JUST ONE THING, PUNKO-- **MONEY!**

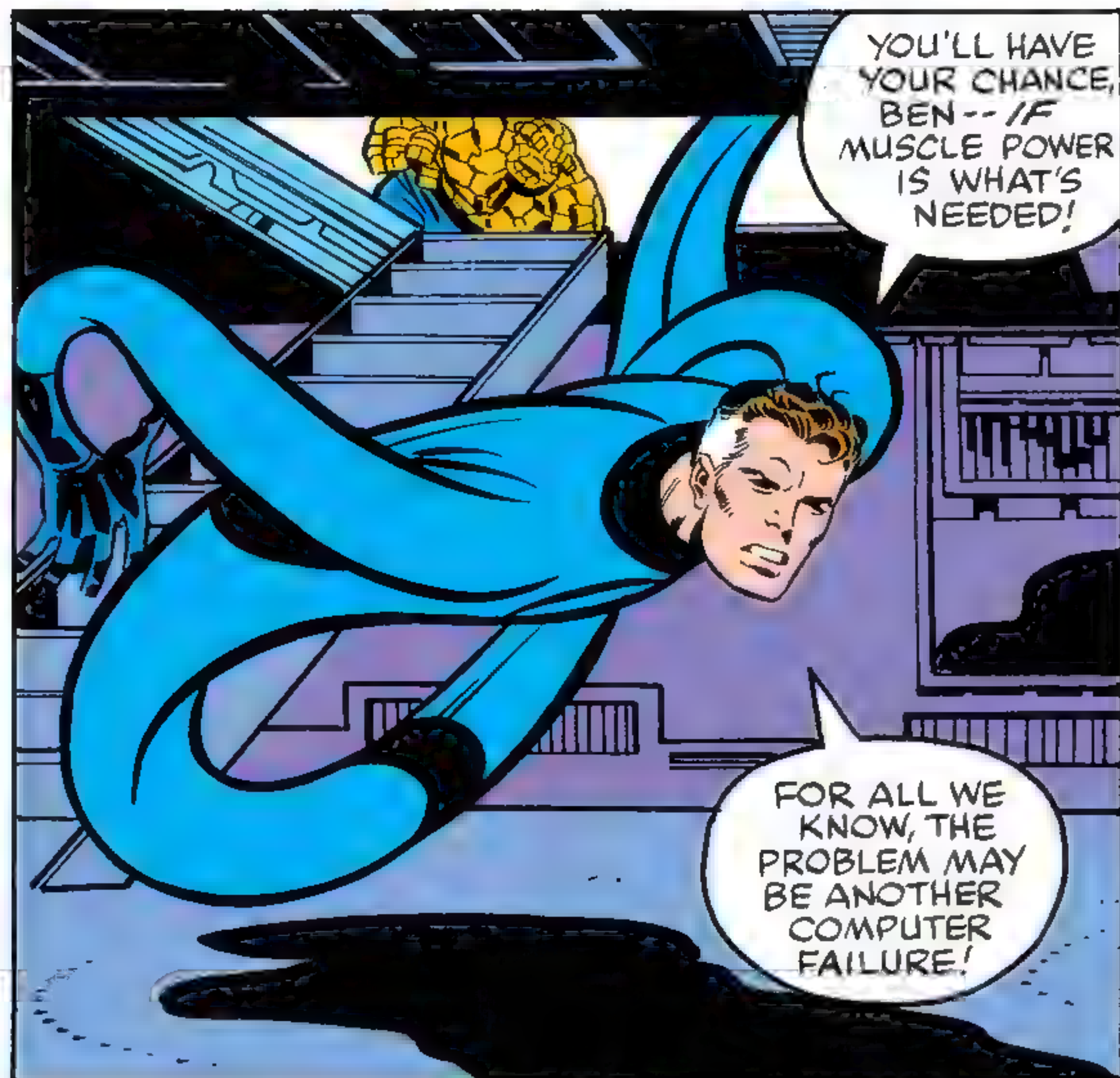
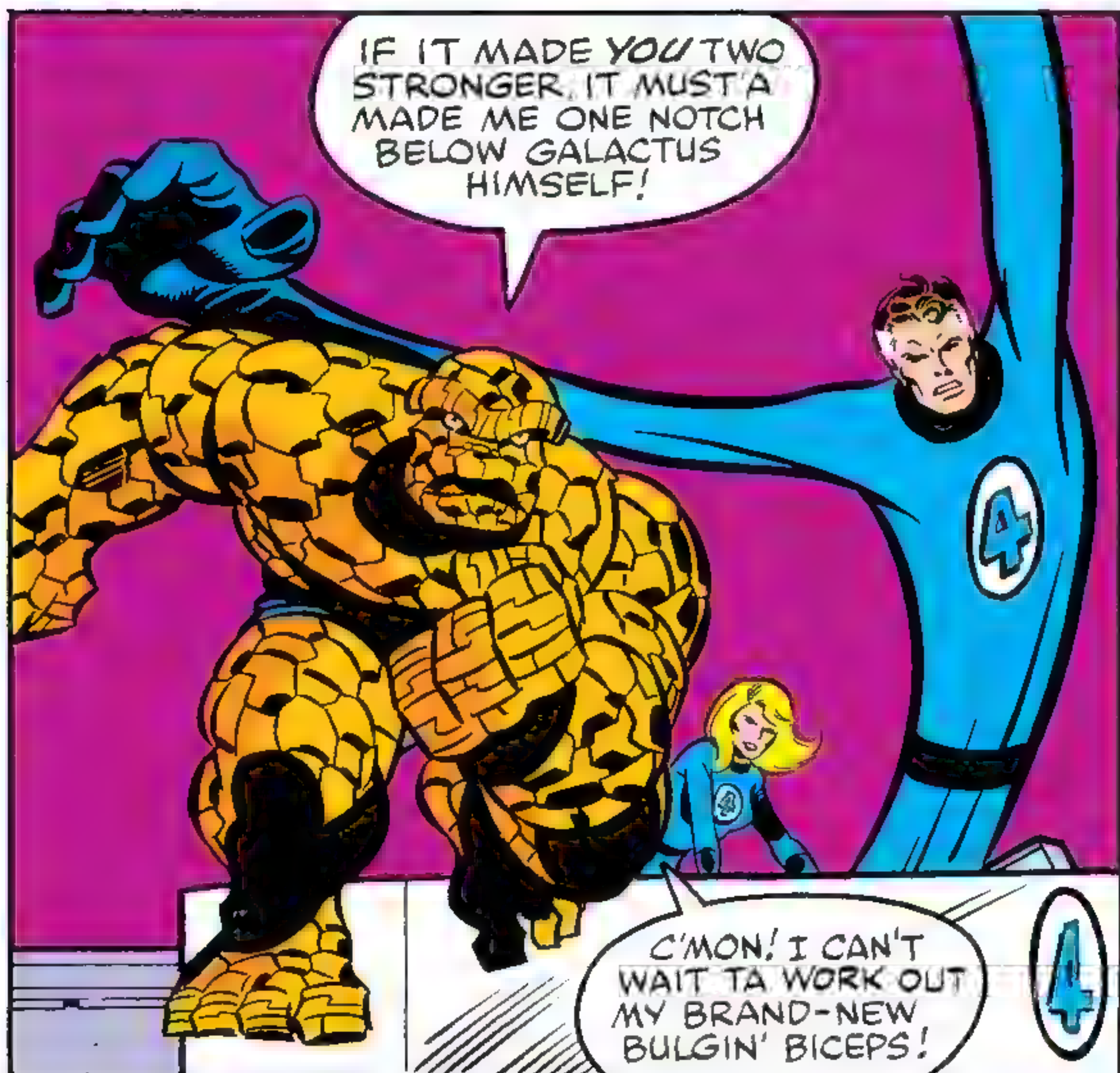


I ALWAYS HEARD YOU SCIENTIST TYPES WERE **LOADED** WITH MONEY!

BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY-- I'M NOT WITH A FOUNDATION!

DON'T KNOW ABOUT NO FOUNDATION-- BUT I KNOW YOU GOTTA HAVE MONEY --AN' WE'LL GET IT-- EVEN IF WE GOTTA **BEAT** IT OUTTA YOU!





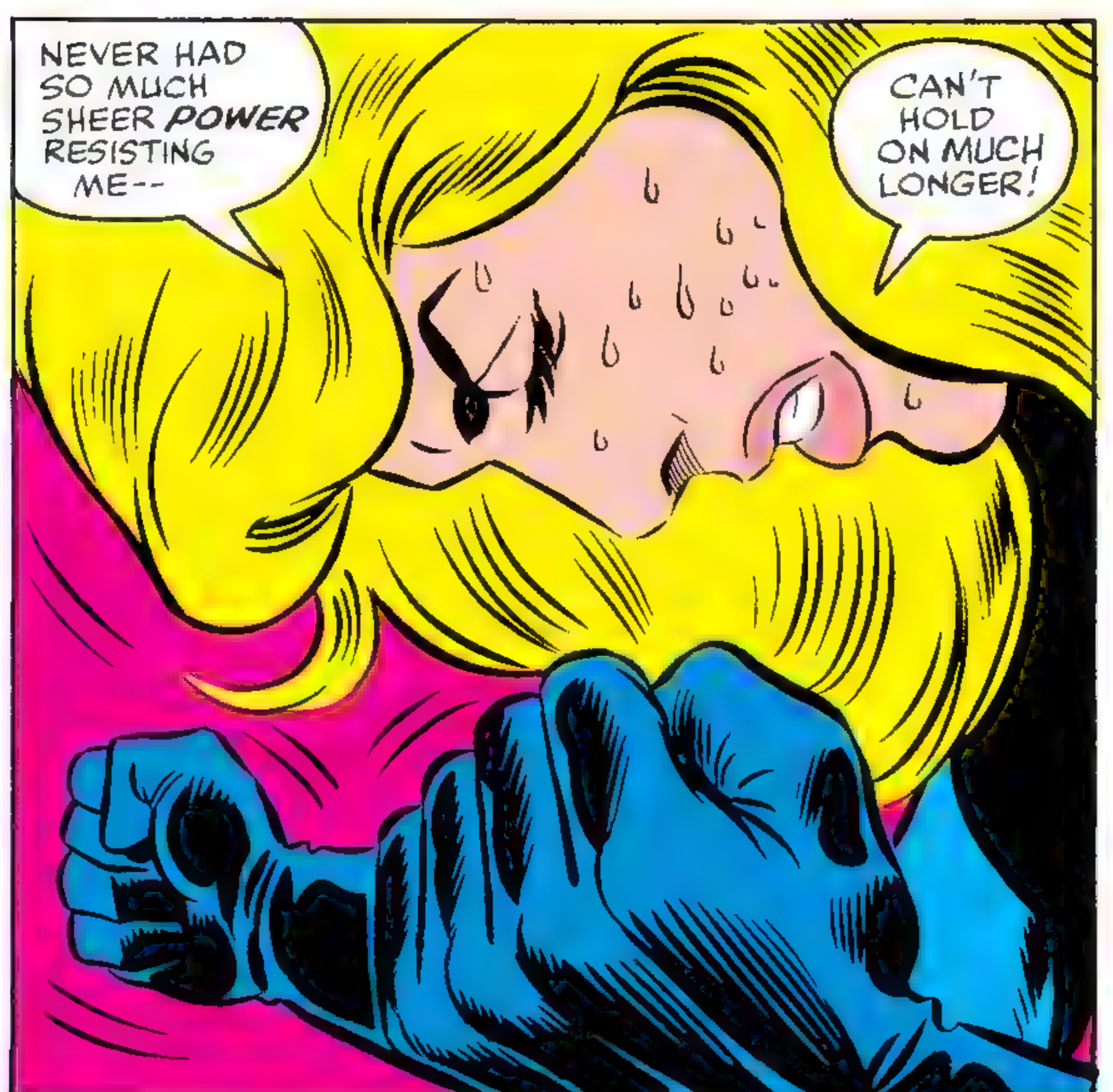
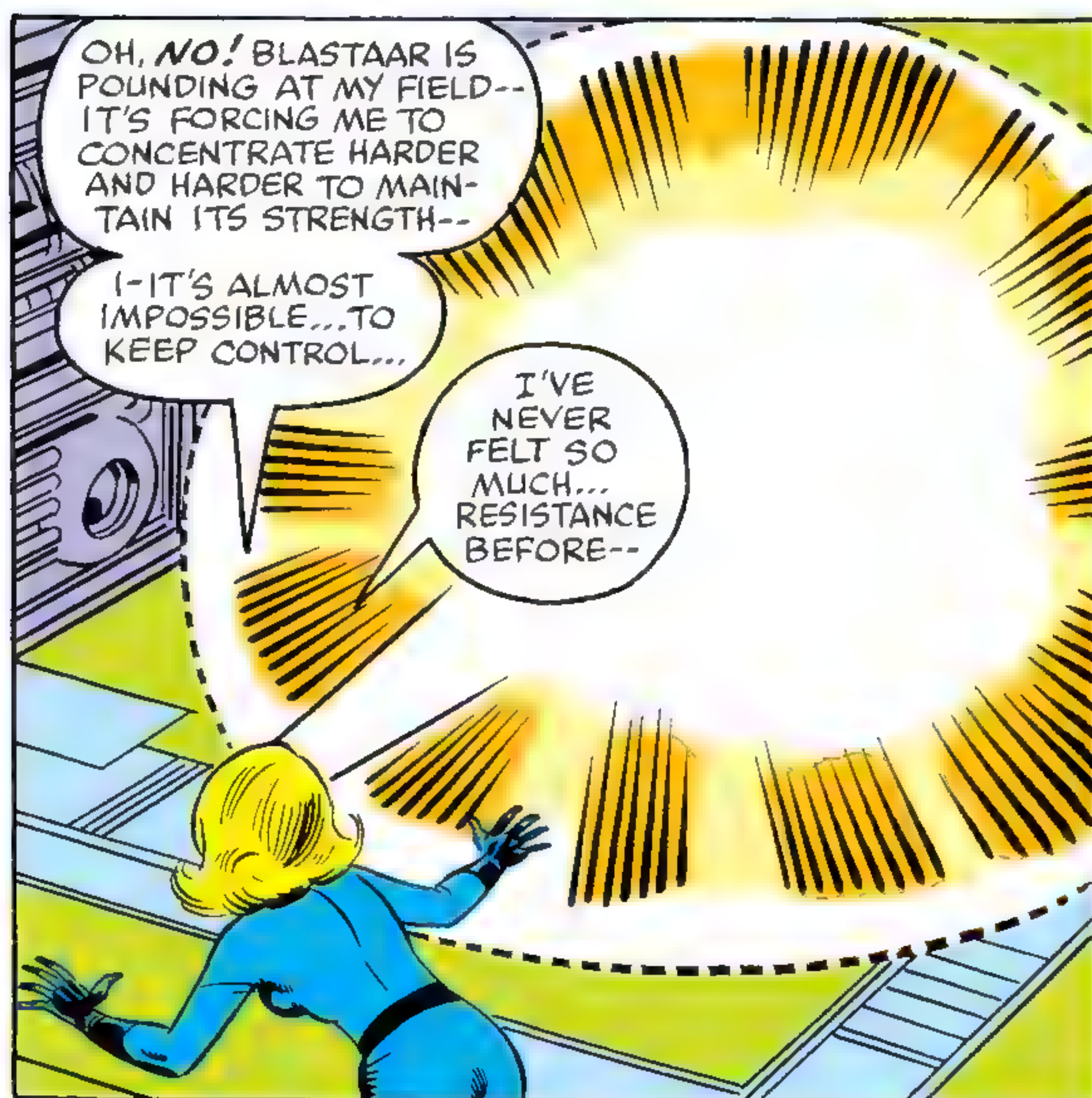
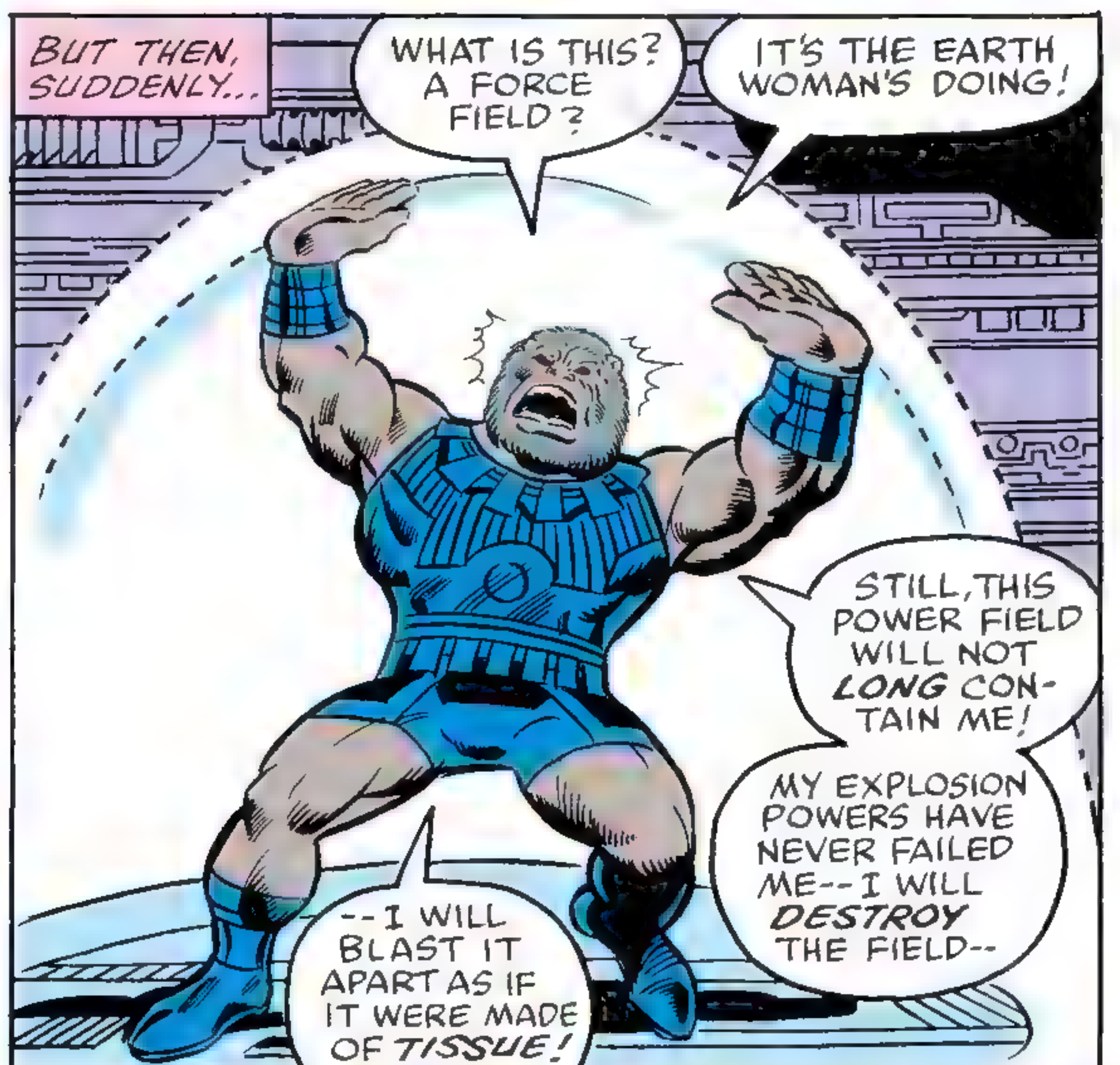
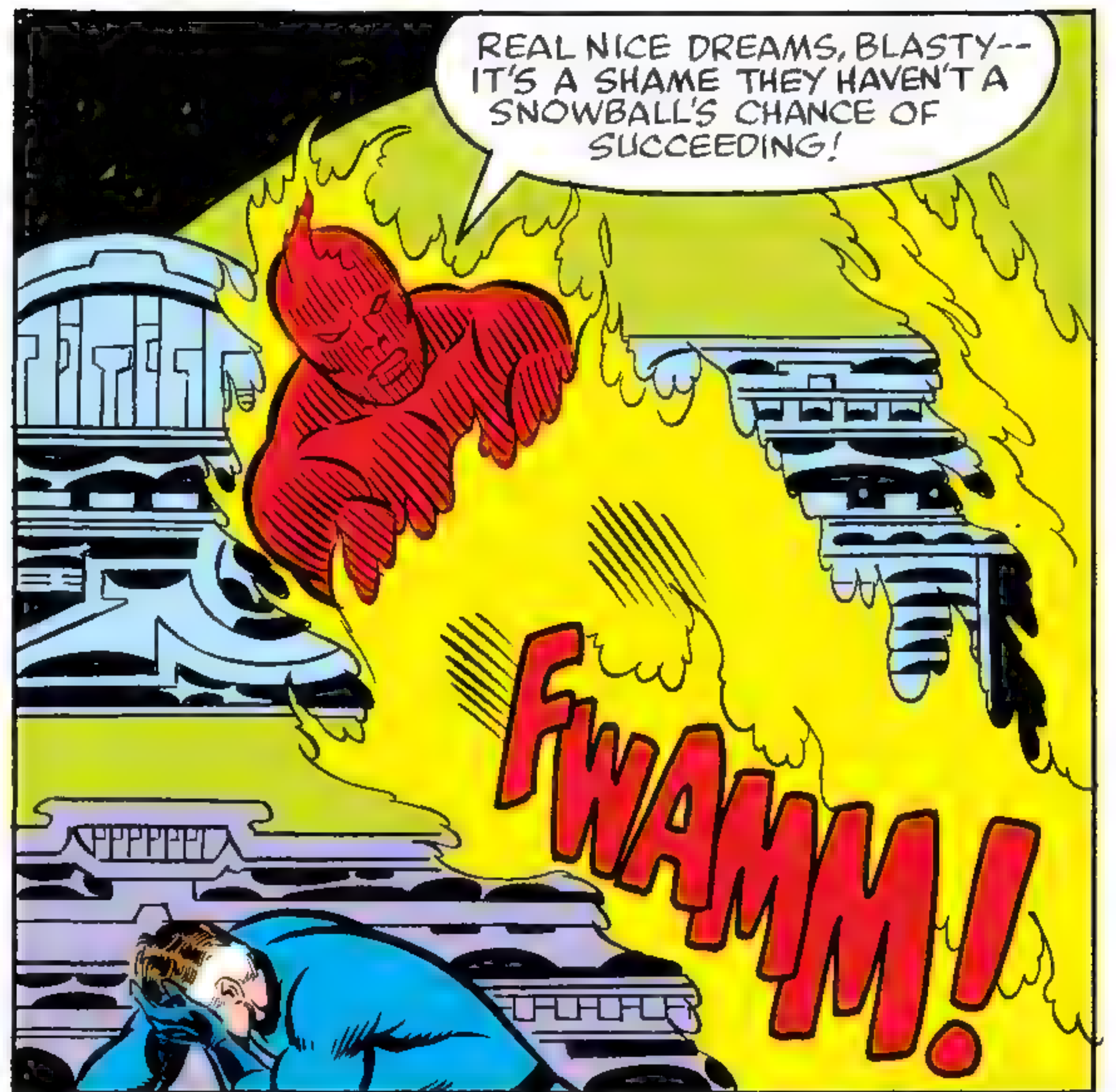


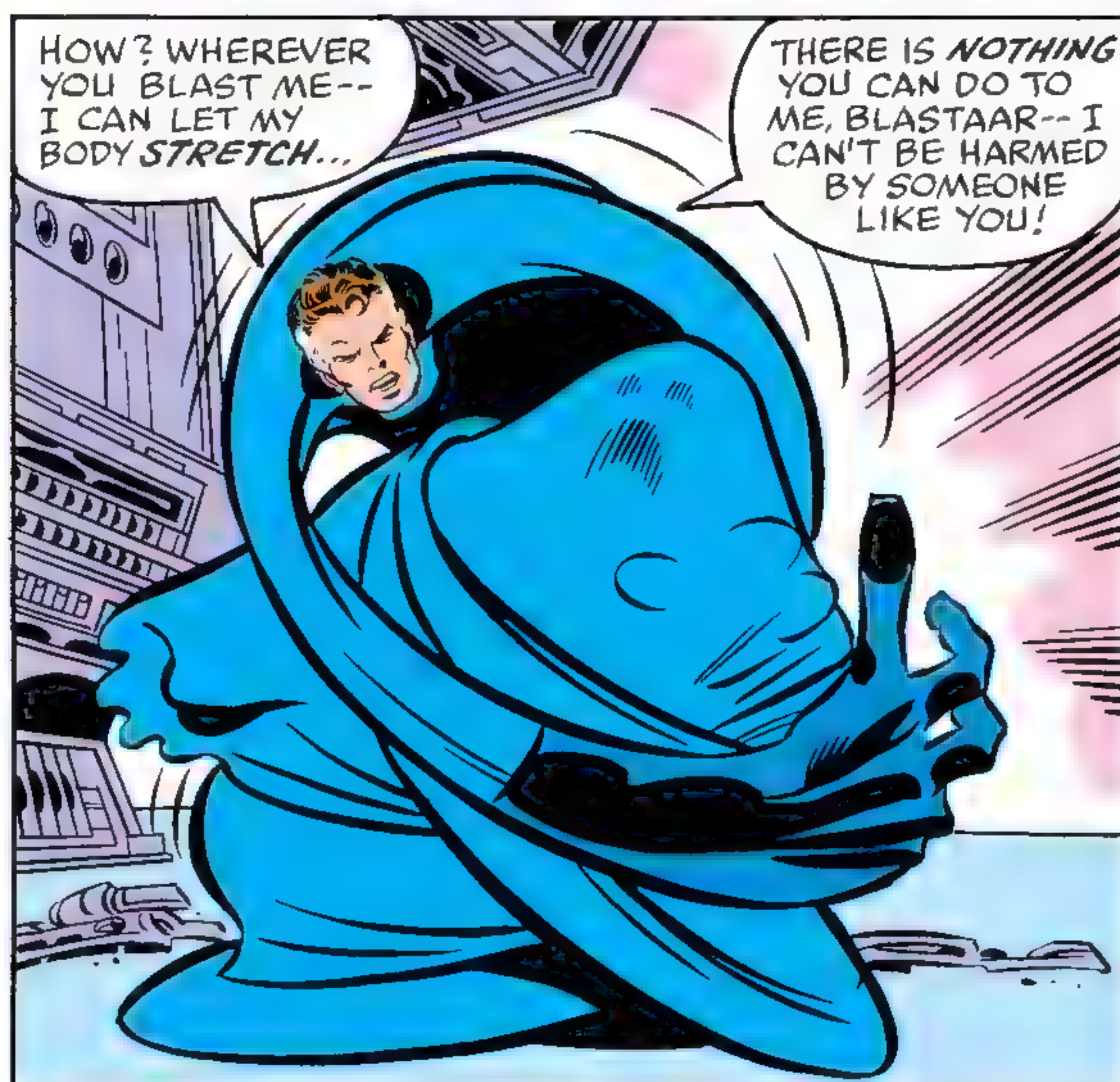
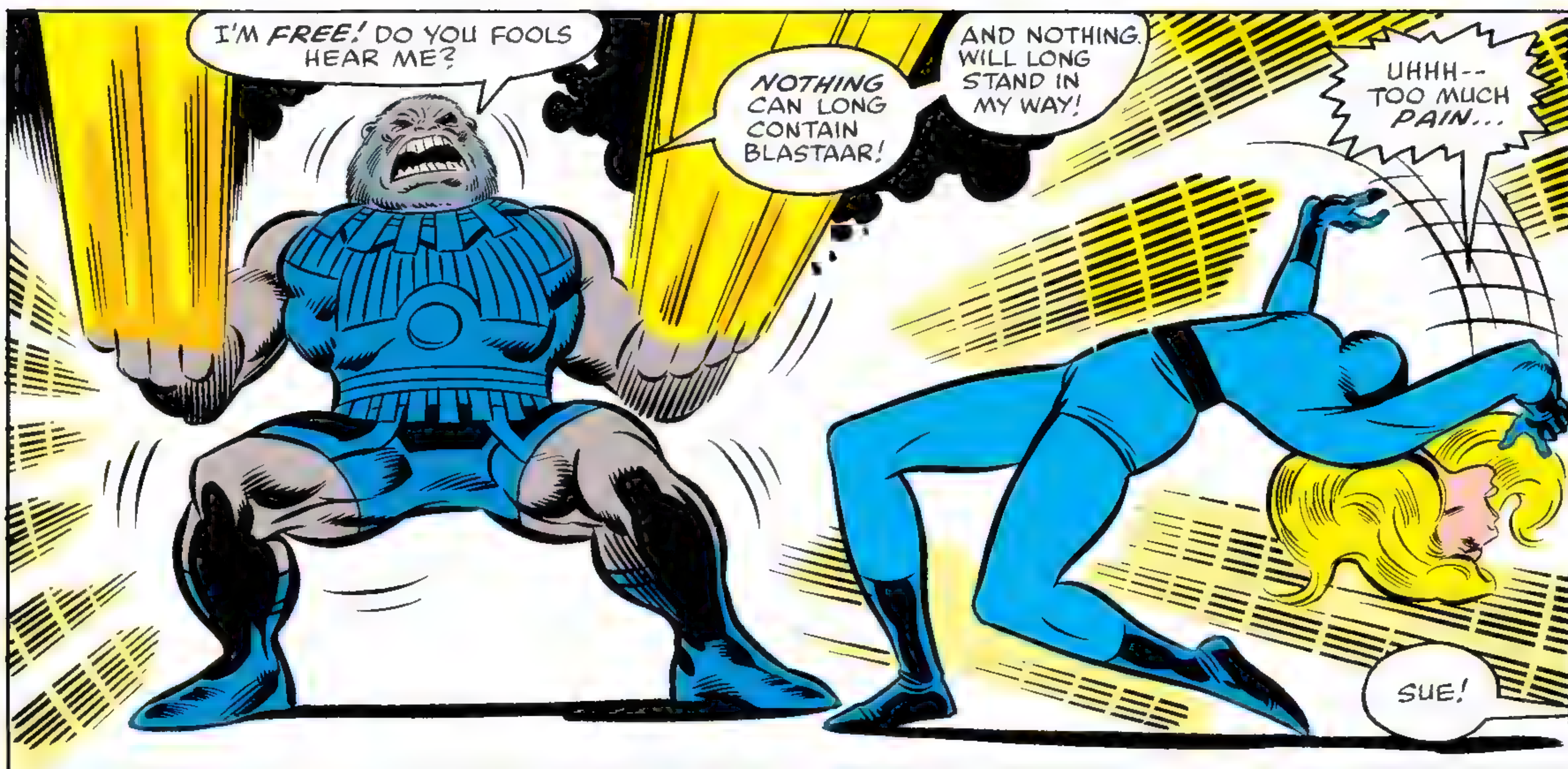
NO COMPUTER, NO MACHINE, NO LIVING OR UNLIVING ENTITY HAS THE POWER *I* WIELD AT MY VERY *WHIM!*

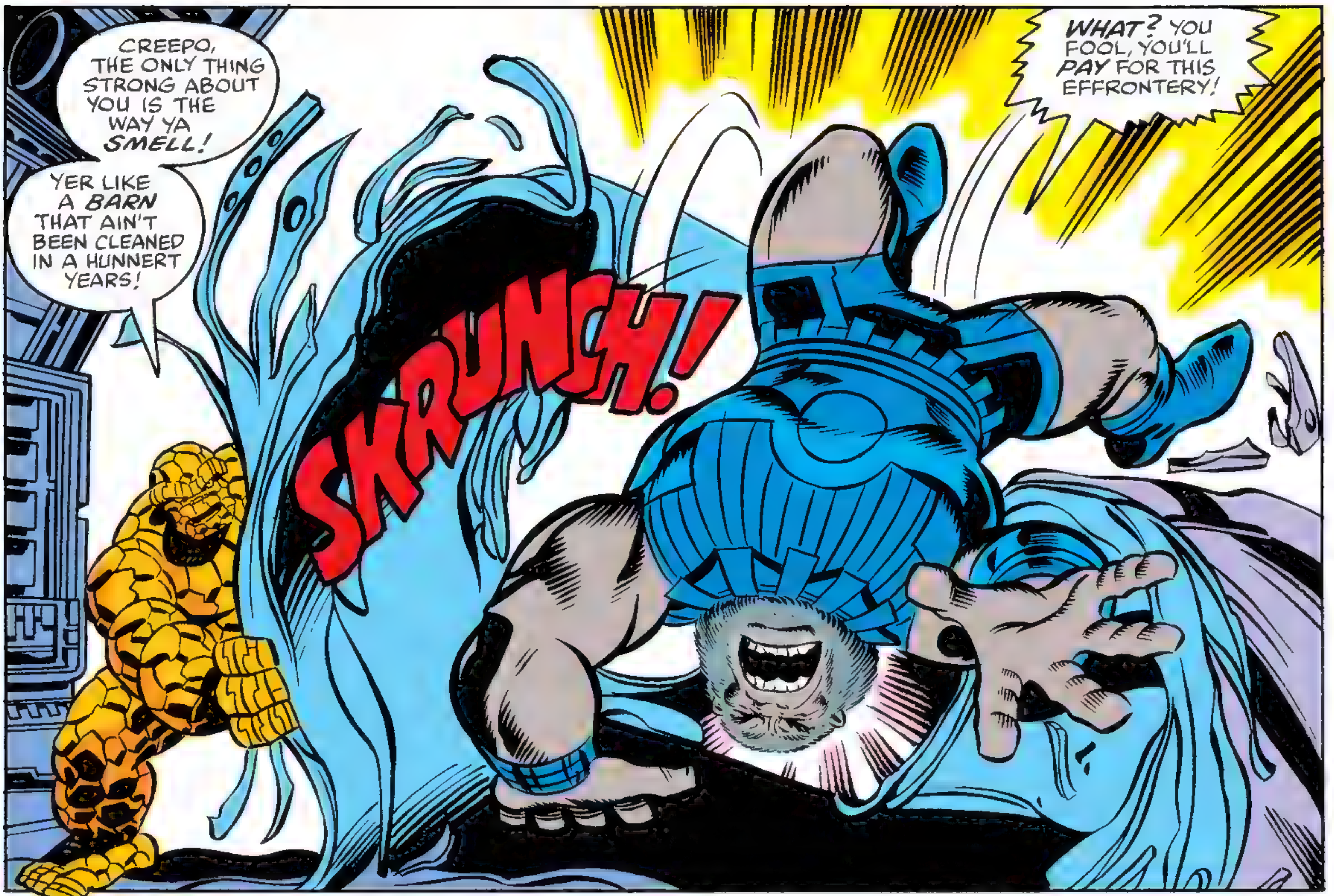
I AM BLASTAAR, THE LIVING BOMB-BURST!!

AND WHATEVER I TOUCH--I DESTROY!!

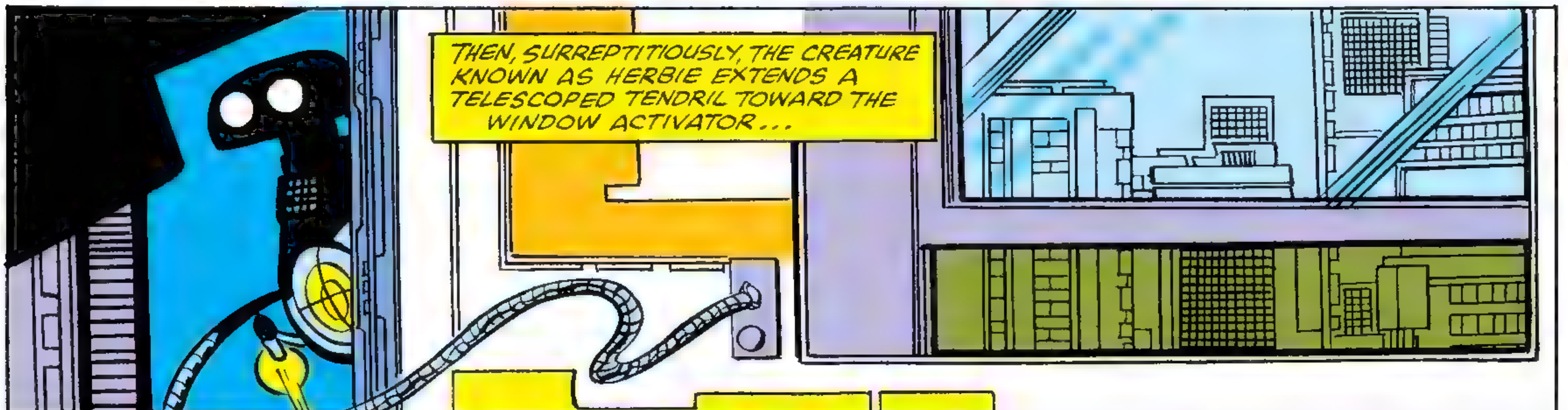


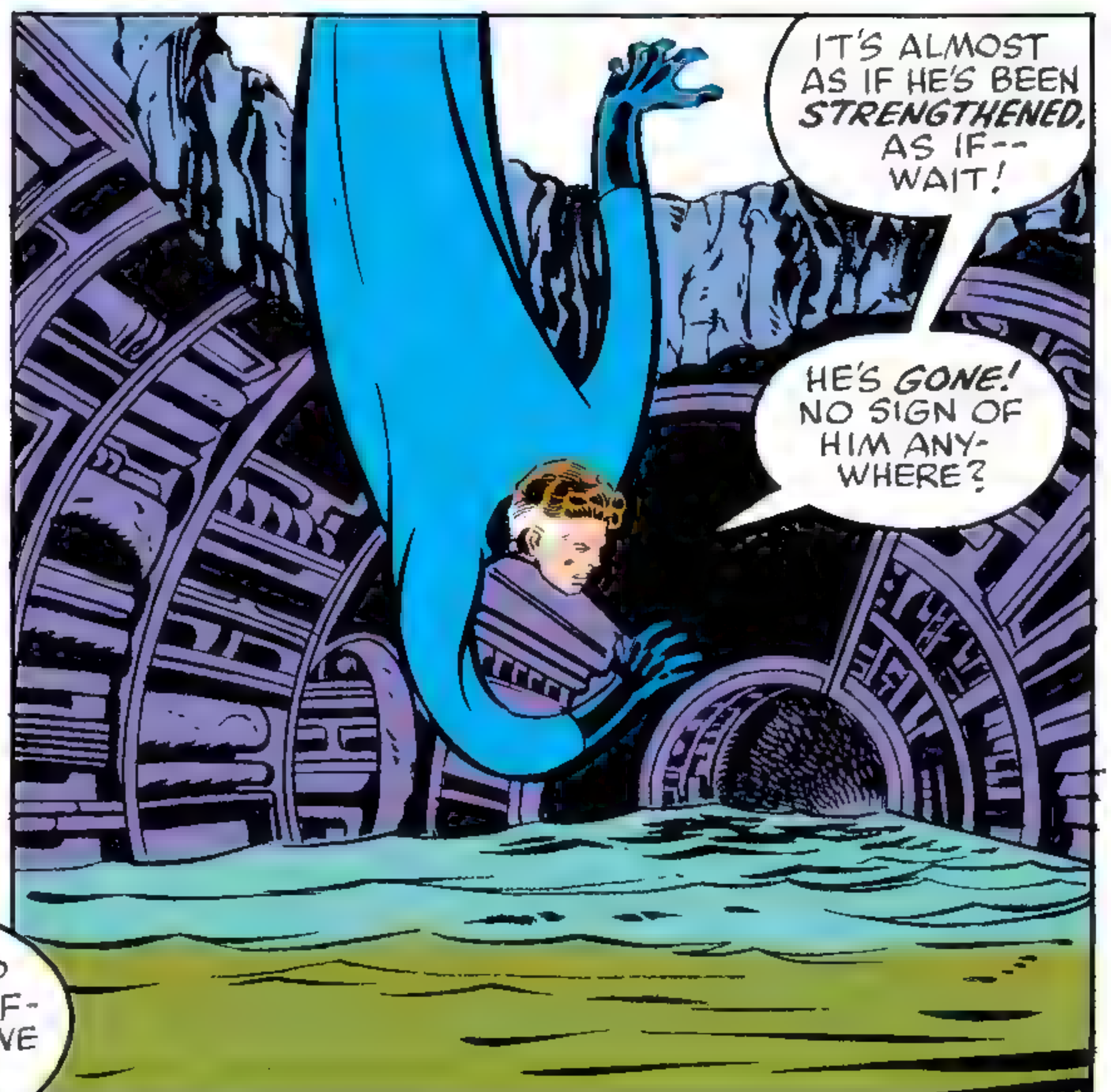
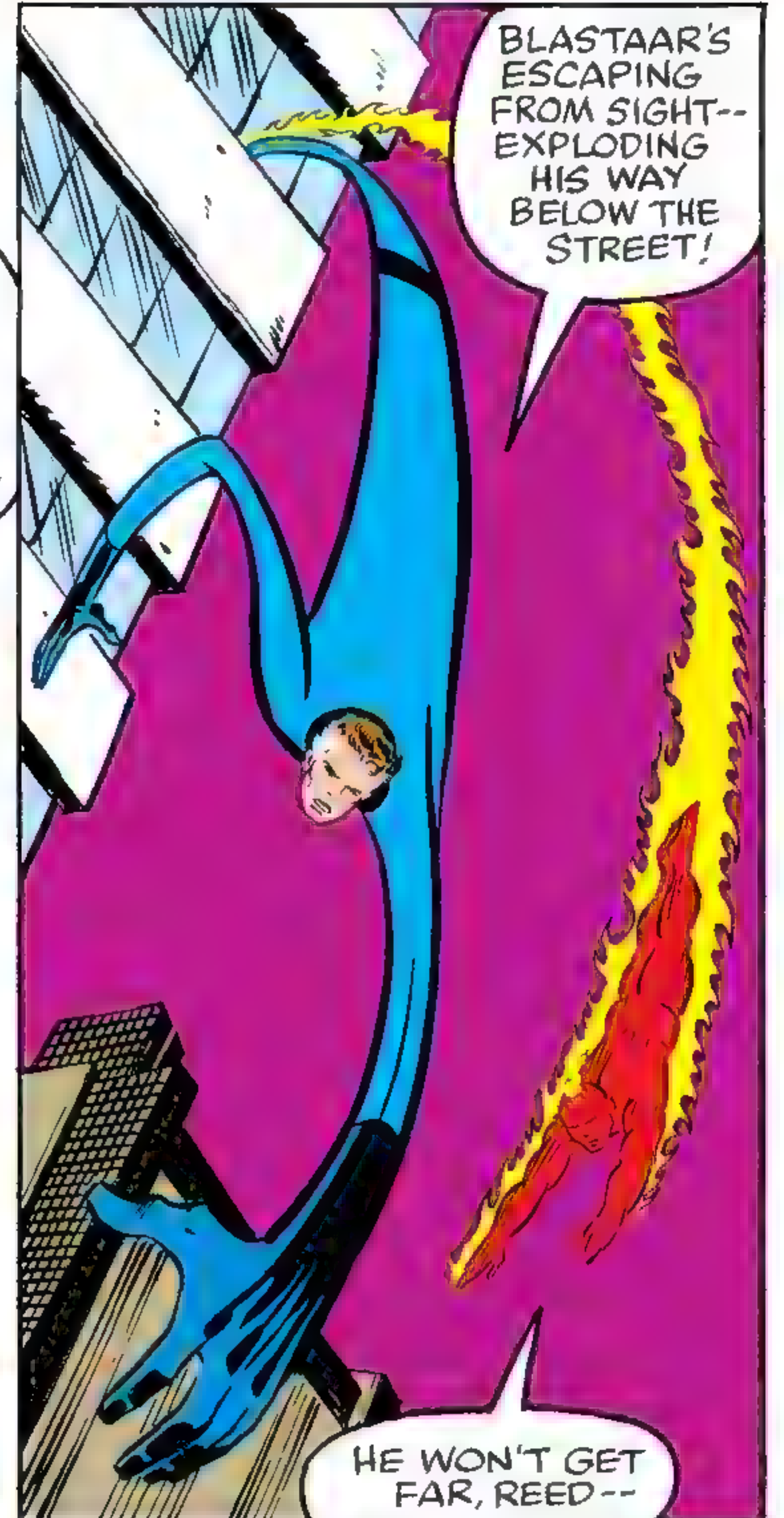
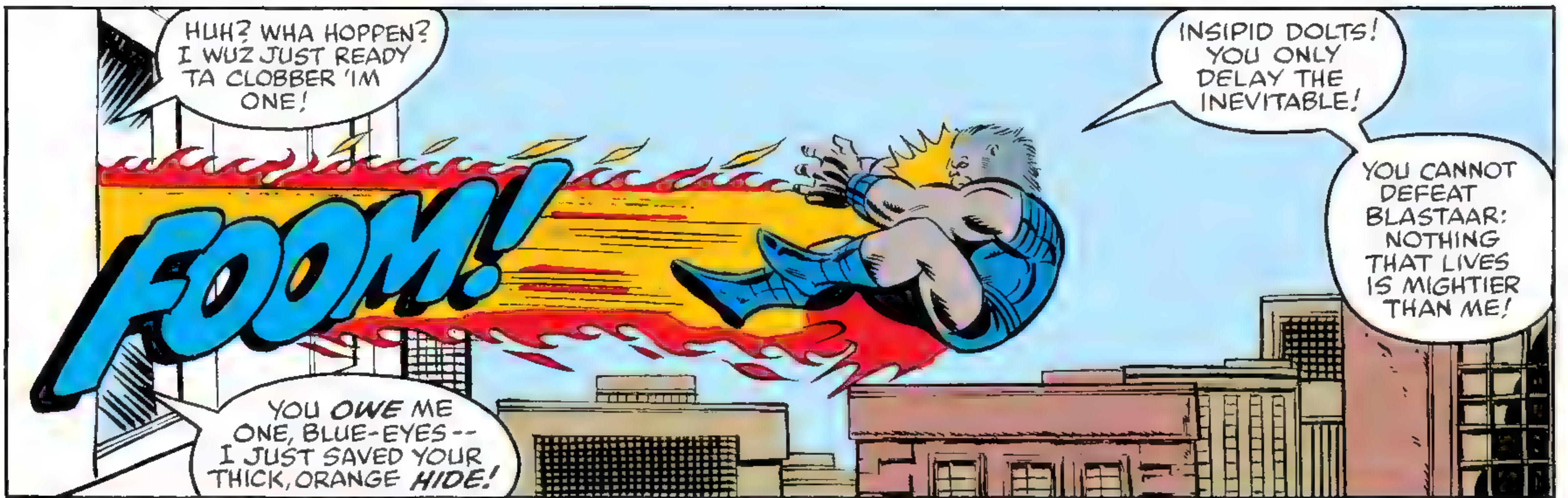




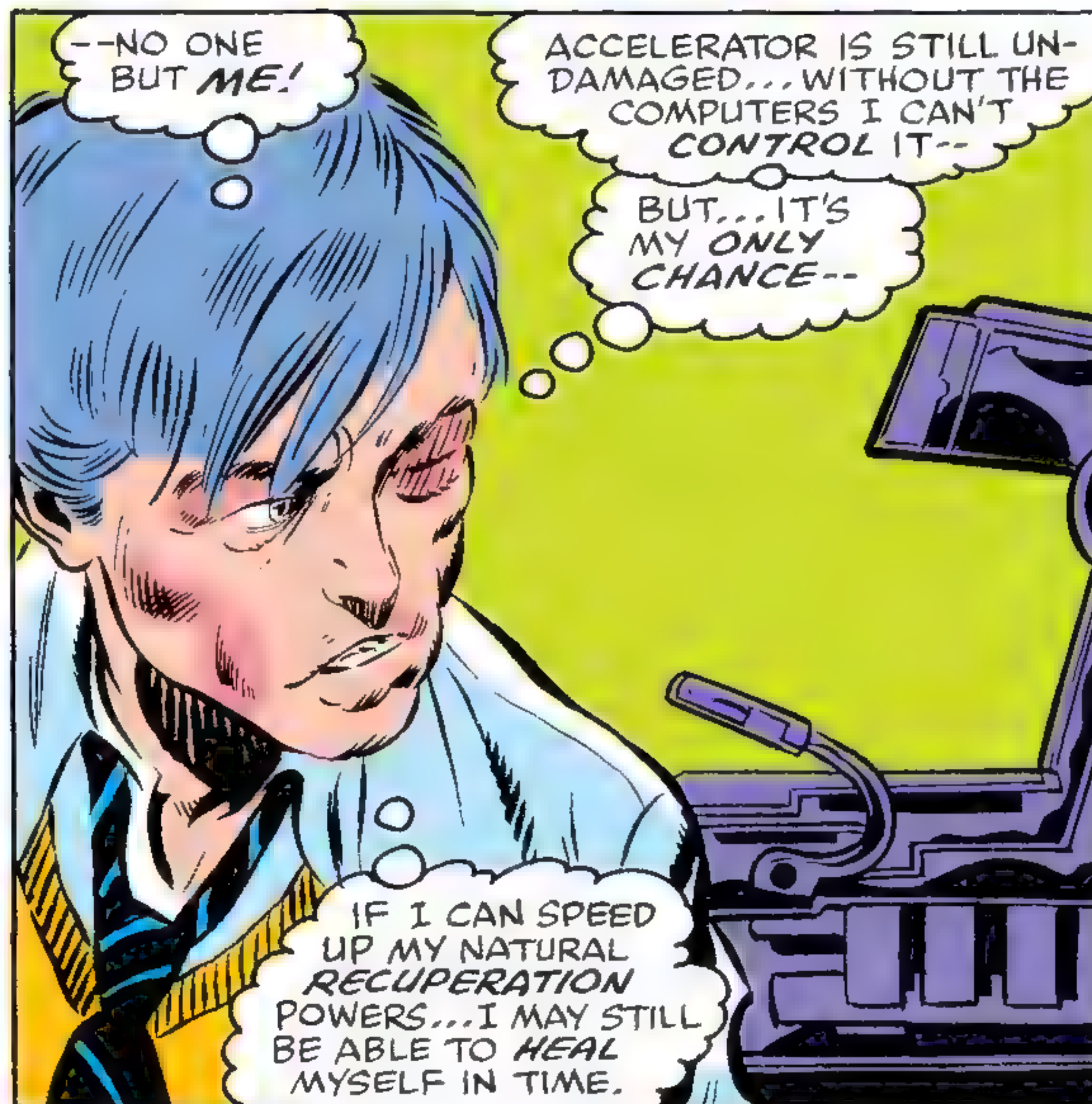
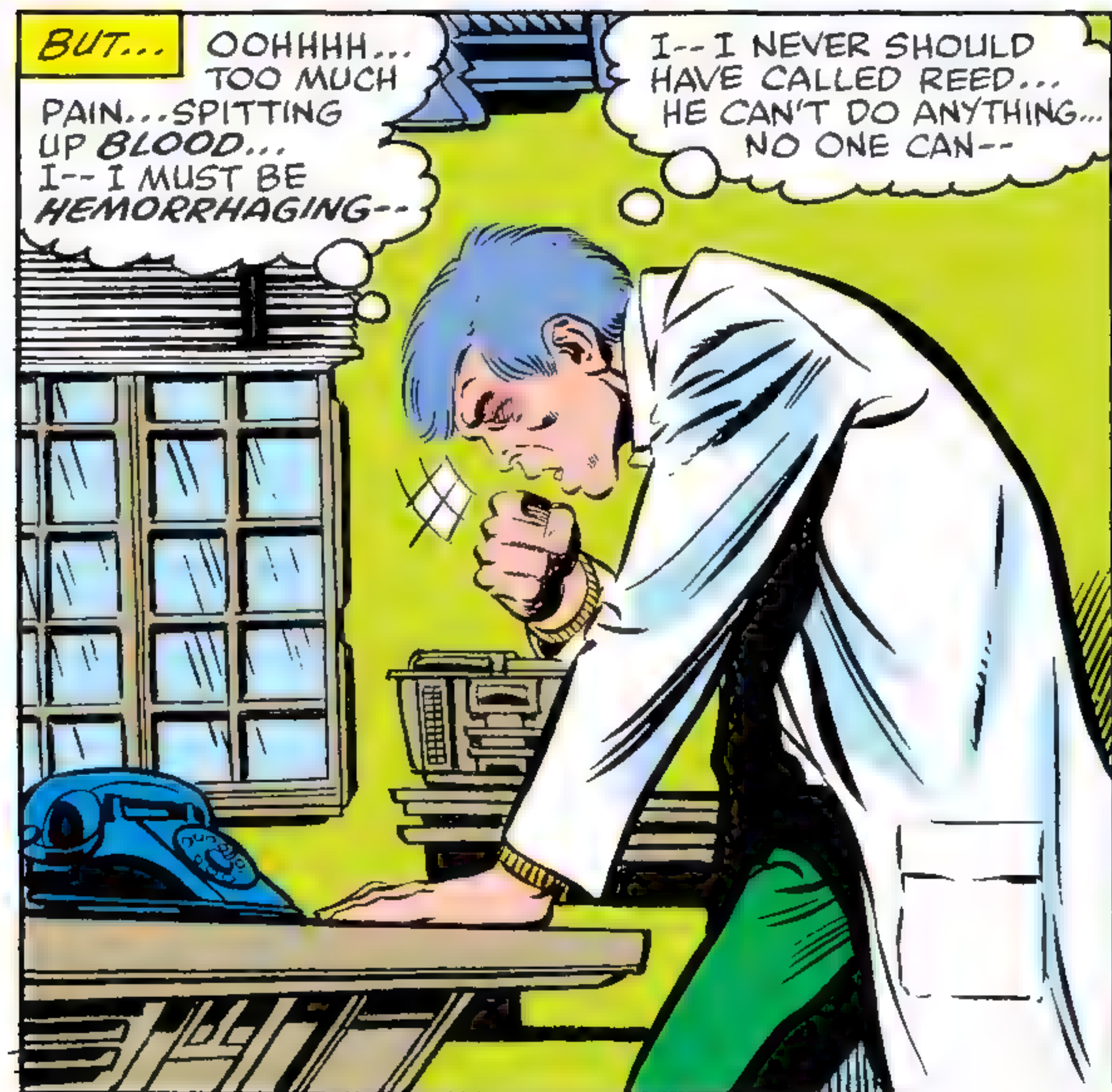
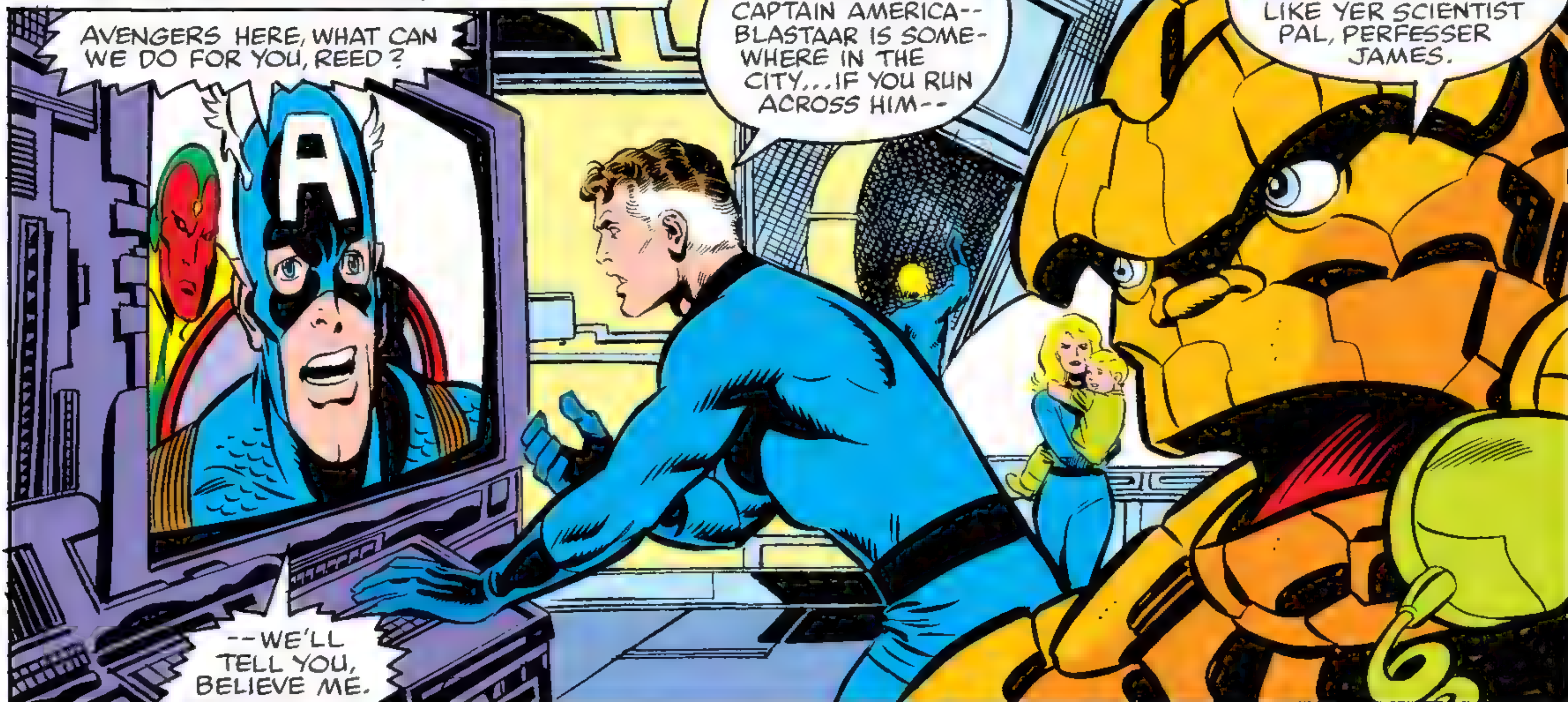


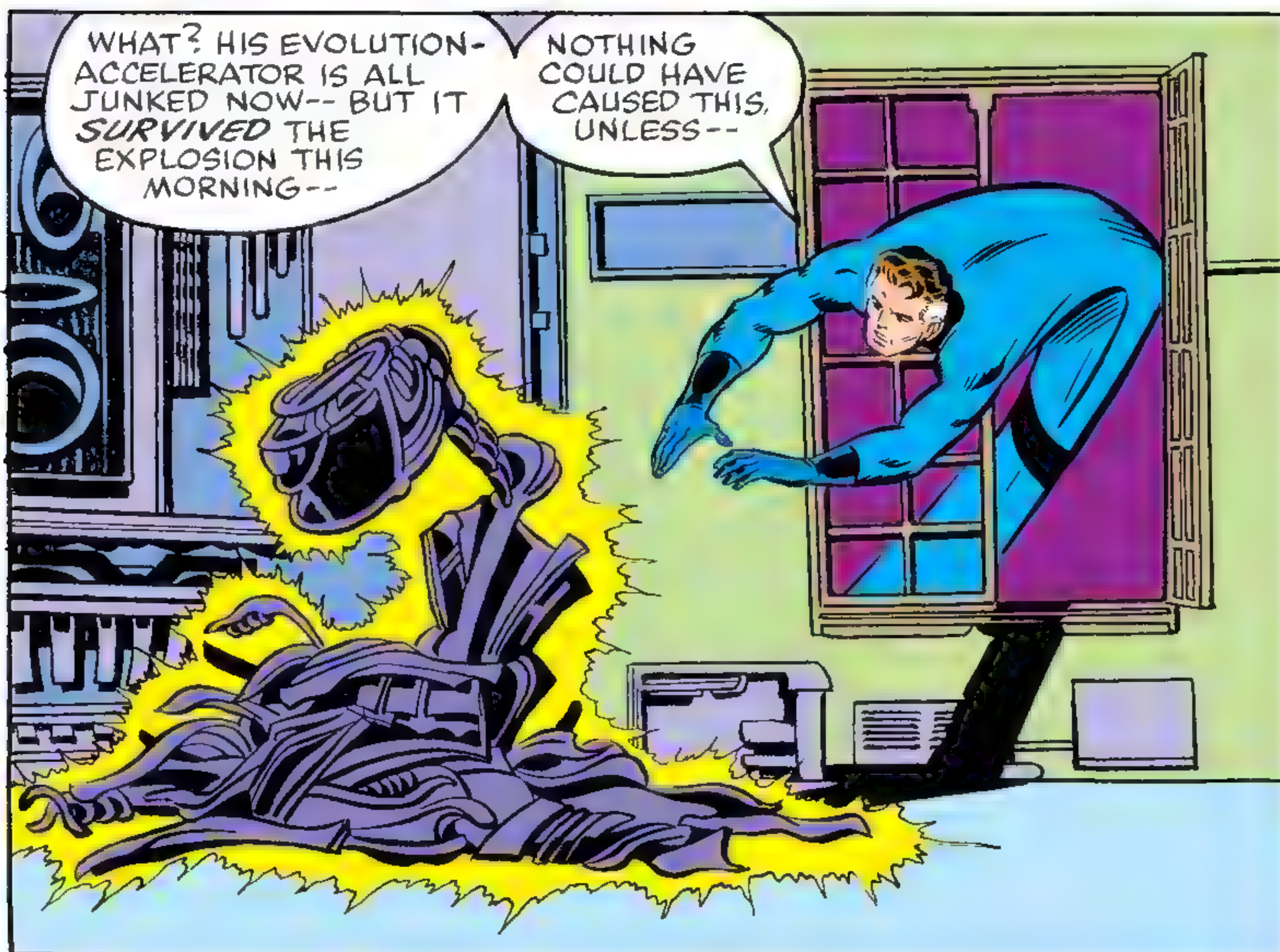
BLASTAAR TUMBLES BACK TOWARD THE BAXTER BUILDING WALL, WHILE, HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWS, A SILENT, HOVERING ROBOT WATCHES WITH AN UNEXPECTED CURIOSITY.

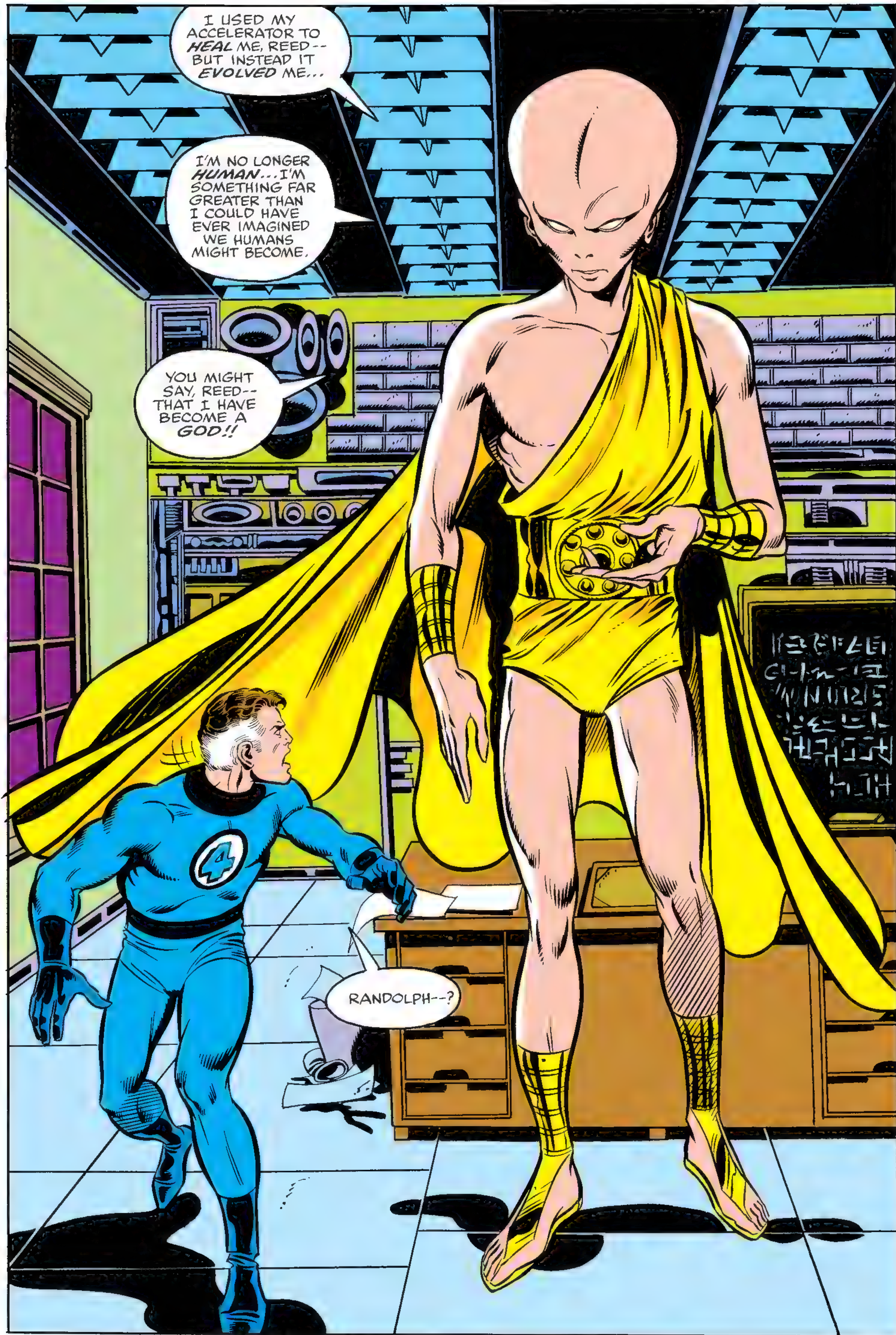


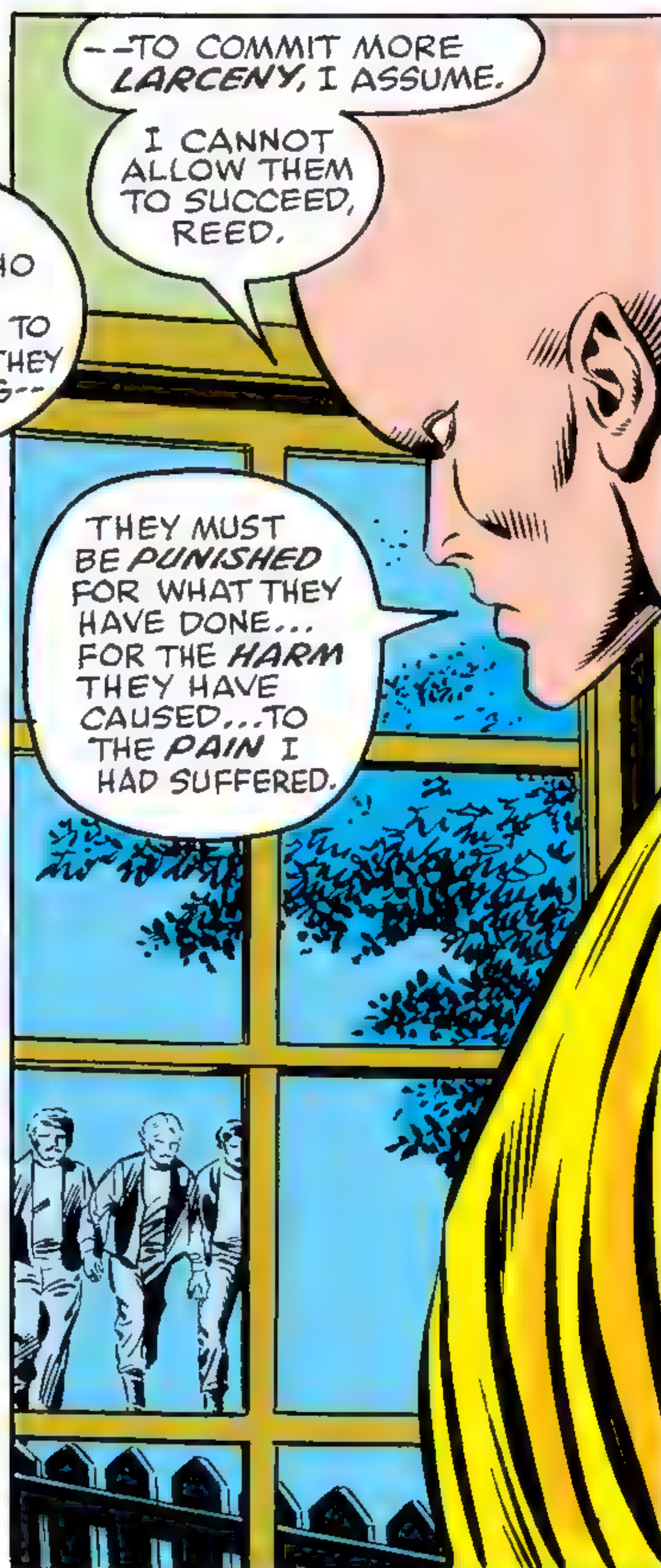
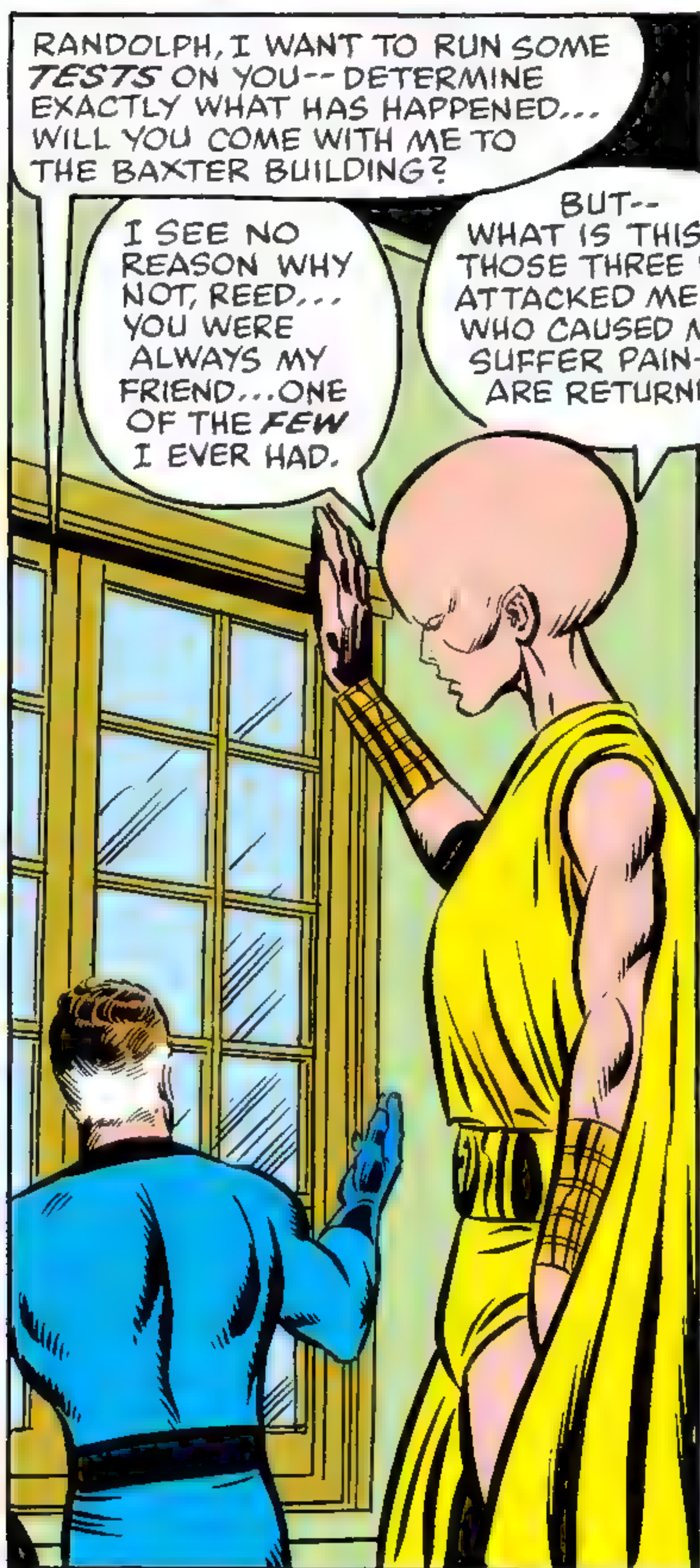


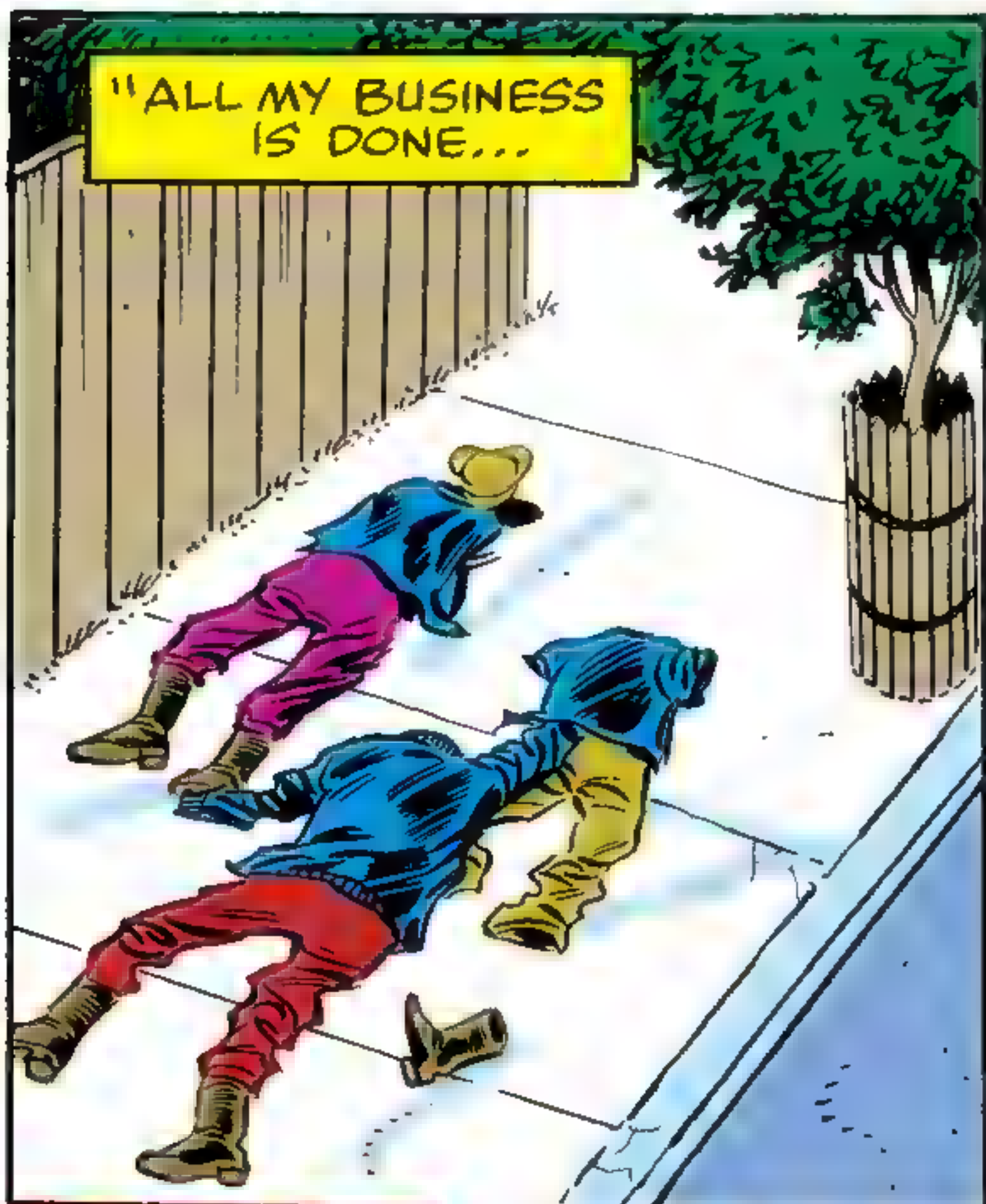
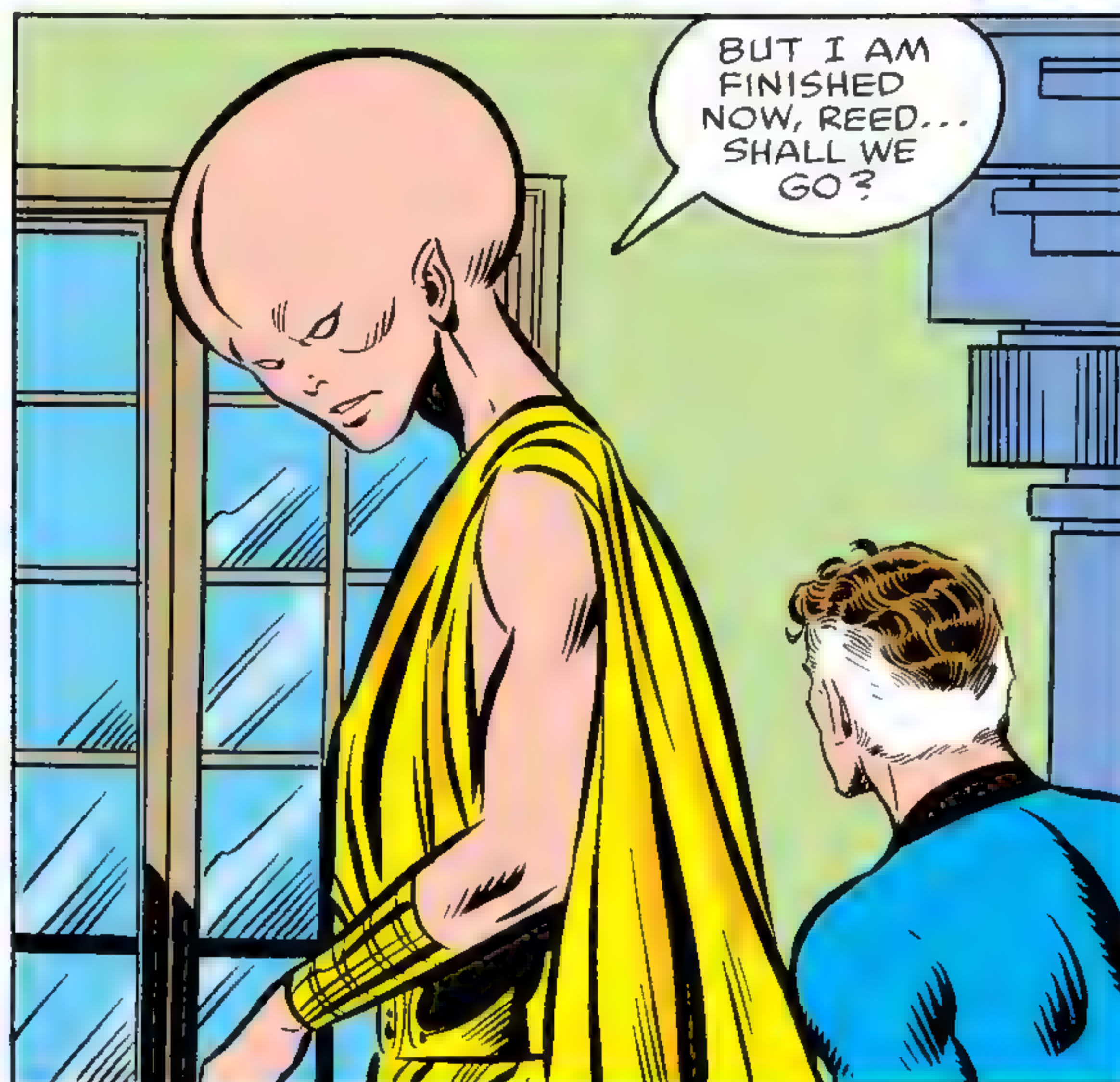
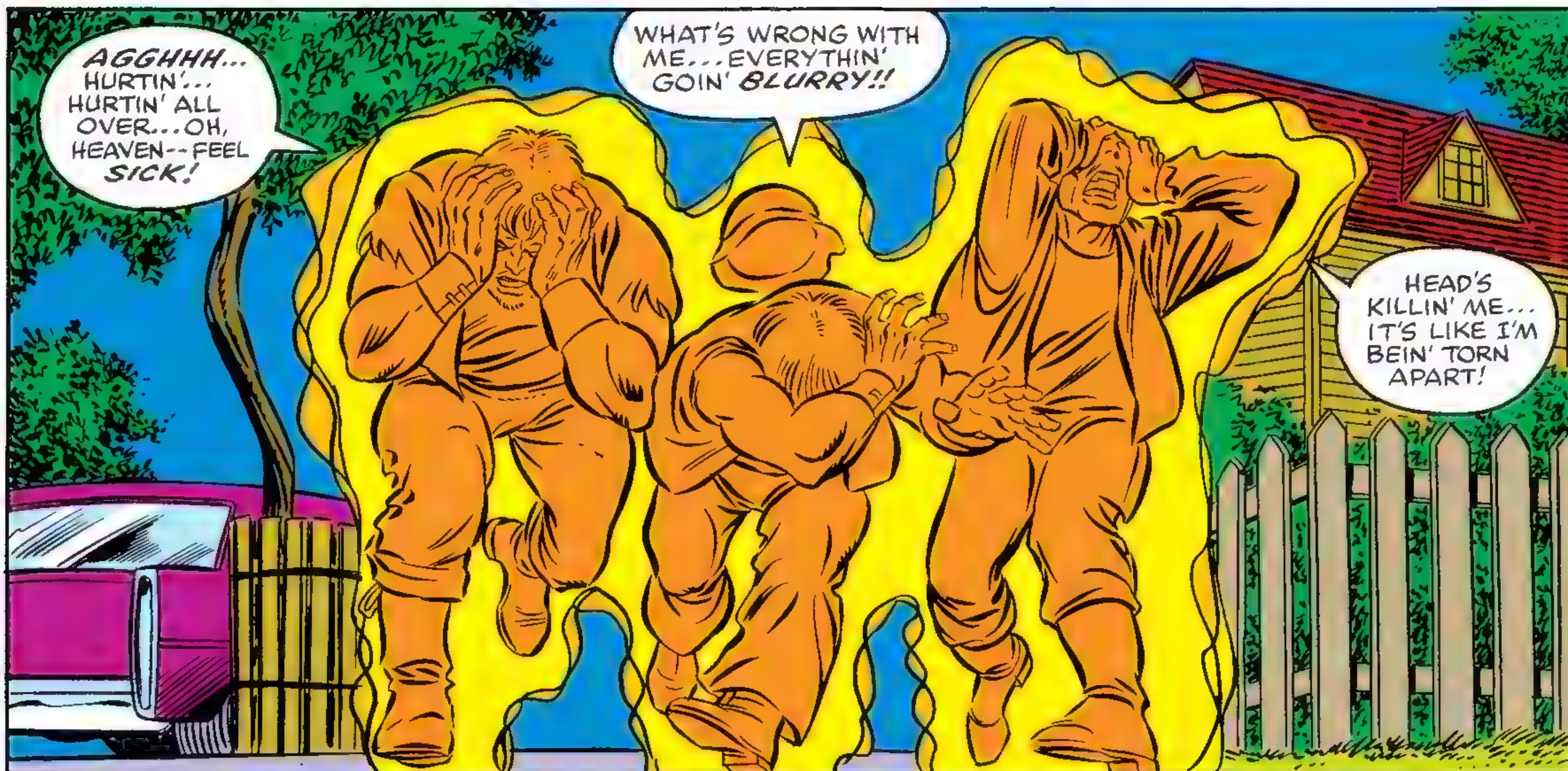
FRANTIC MOMENTS LATER, REED RICHARDS RETURNS TO THE BAXTER BUILDING, WHERE...











NEXT ISSUE: *WHERE THERE BE GODS!*

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FANTASTIC FOUR



A GOD WALKS TIMES SQUARE!

Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

STORY BY
MARV
WOLFGAN

DIALOG BY
BILL
MANTLO

PENCILS BY
JOHN
BYRNE

FINISHES BY
PABLO
MARCOS

LETTERS: IRV W.
& MICHAEL H.
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SHOOTER

REED RICHARDS
MR. FANTASTIC



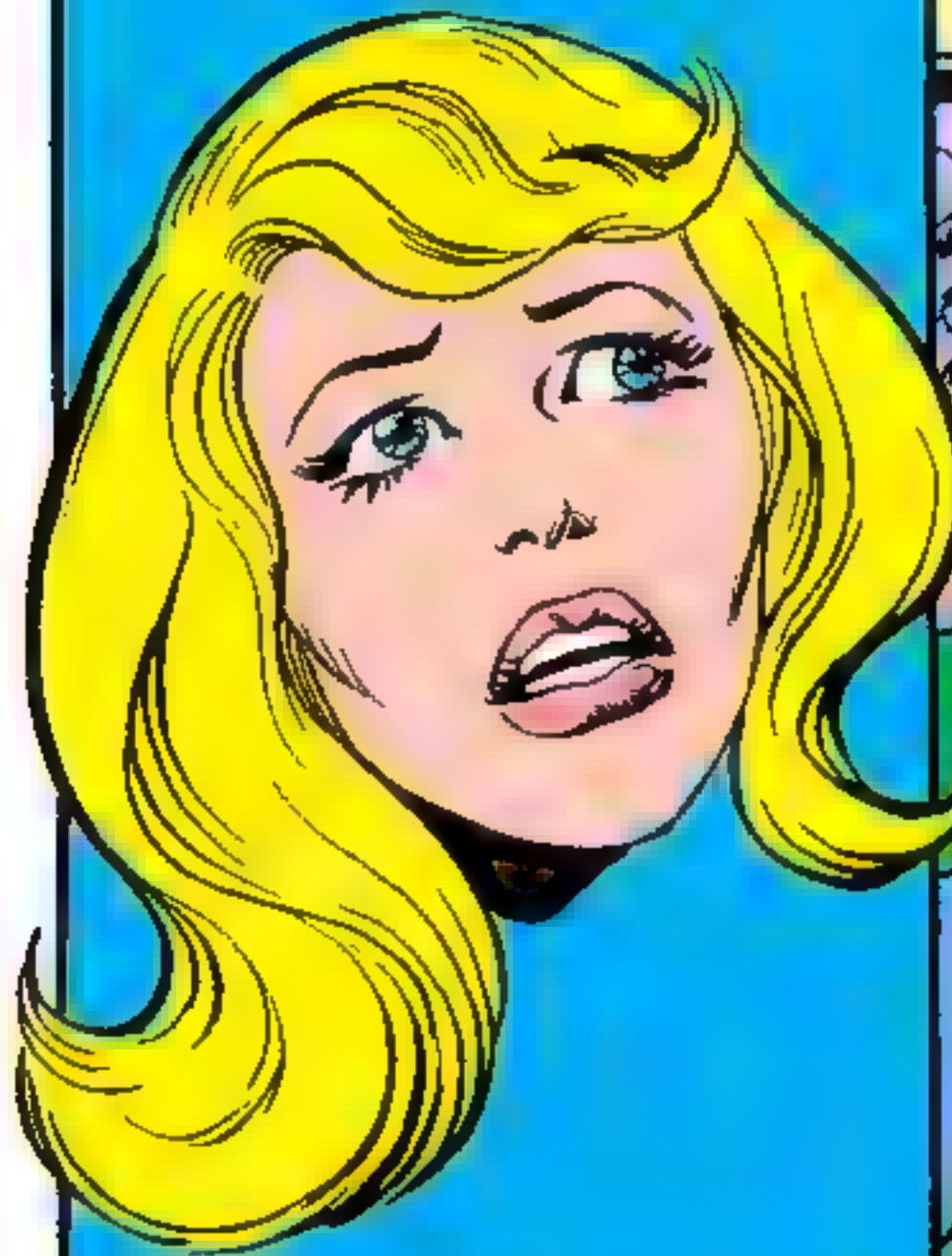
BEN GRIMM
THE THING



JOHNNY STORM
THE HUMAN TORCH



SUSAN RICHARDS
THE INVISIBLE GIRL



WHERE THERE BE GODS!

THERE'S A STRONG SUSPICION THAT THE COPYWRITER WHO COINED THE PHRASE "FUN CITY" TO DESCRIBE NEW YORK HAD HAD ONE TOO MANY MARTINIS...

FOR, AS ANY INFORMED CITIZEN OF THE STREETS COULD TELL YOU, THERE'S MORE MADNESS PER MILE IN MANHATTAN THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE GOOD OLD U.S. OF A.!

GRAHAM
PARKER
AND THE
RUM

L-LOOK! A
GUY WALKING
IN THE AIR
ABOVE TIMES
SQUARE!

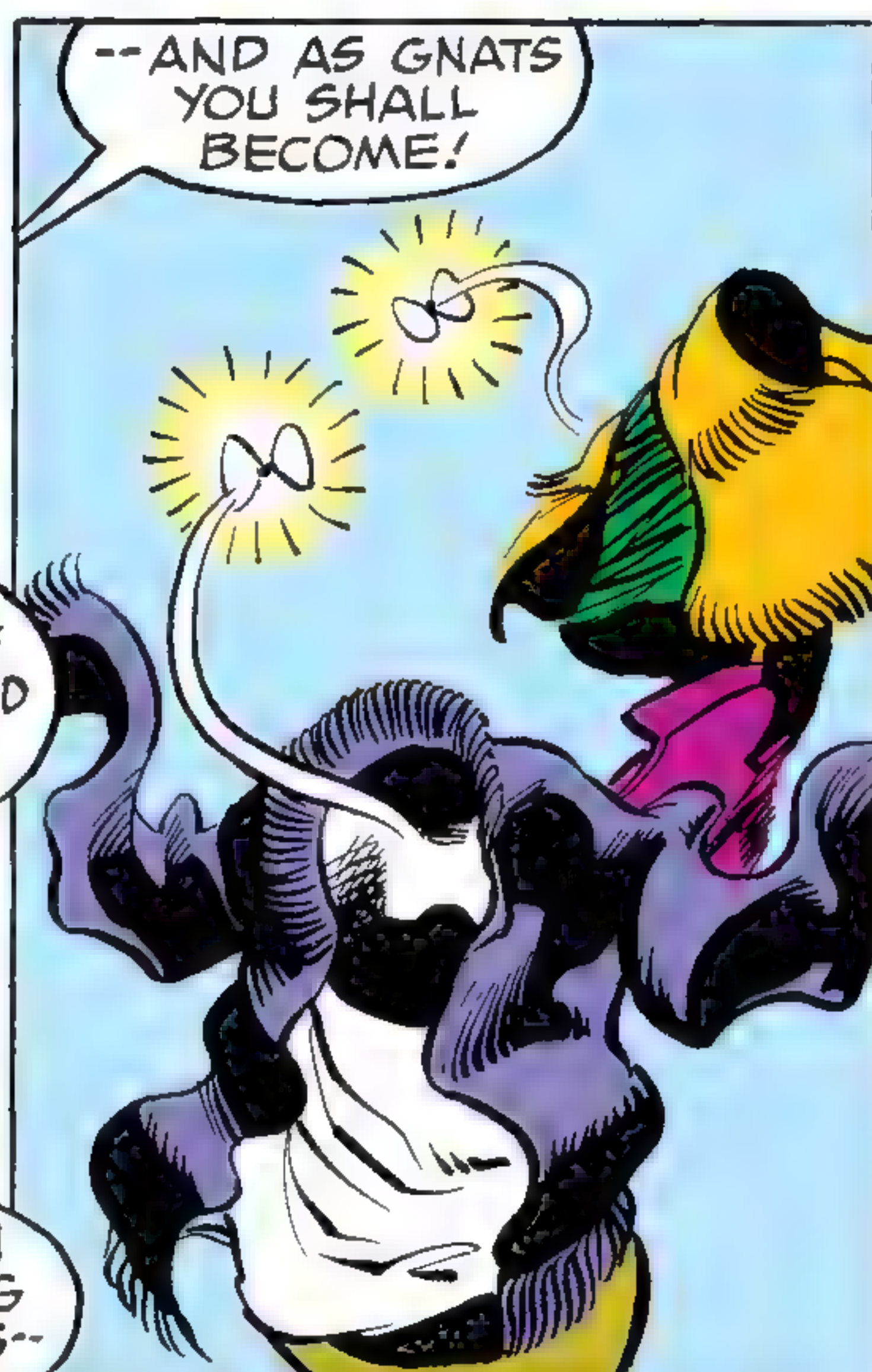
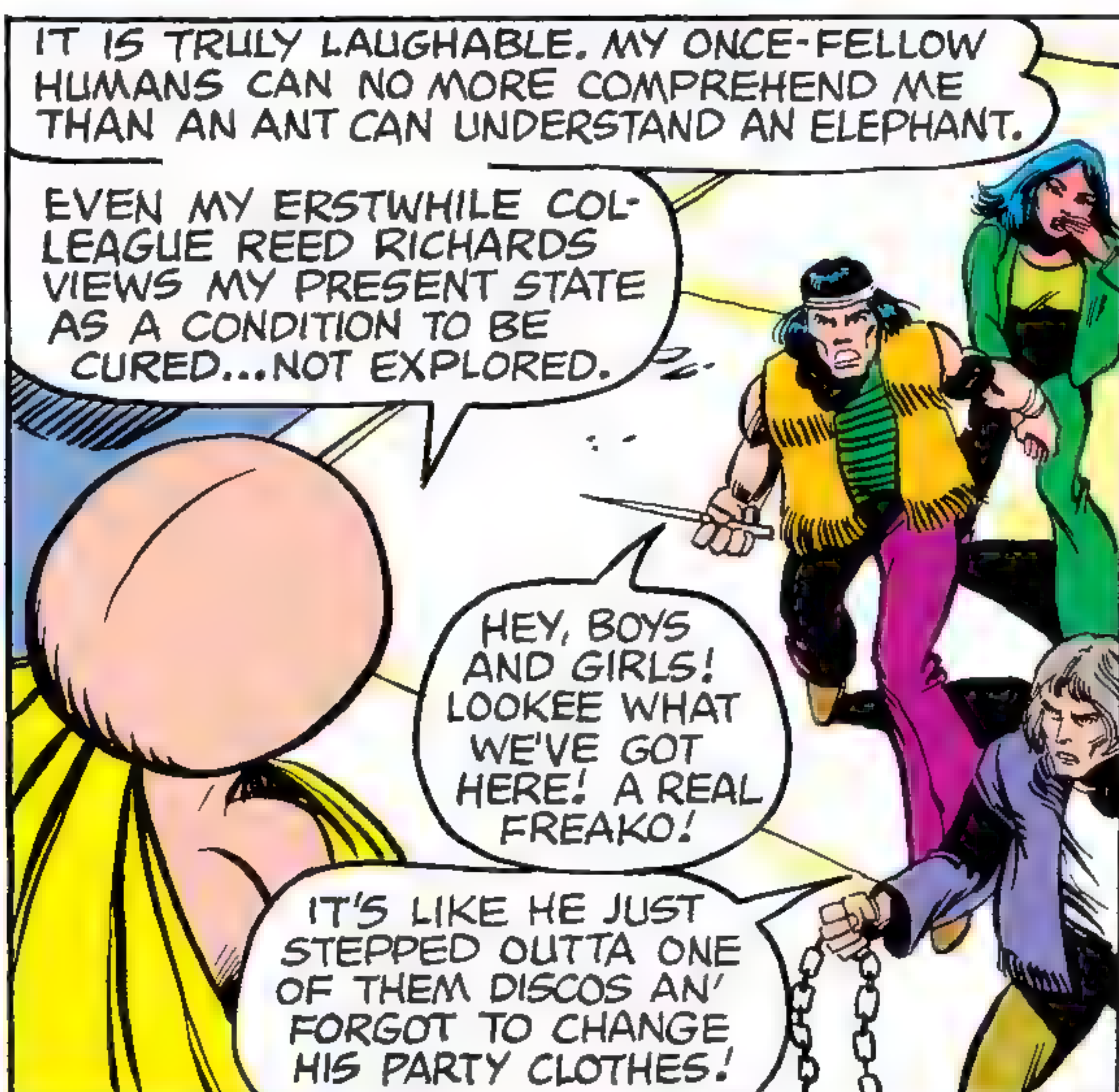
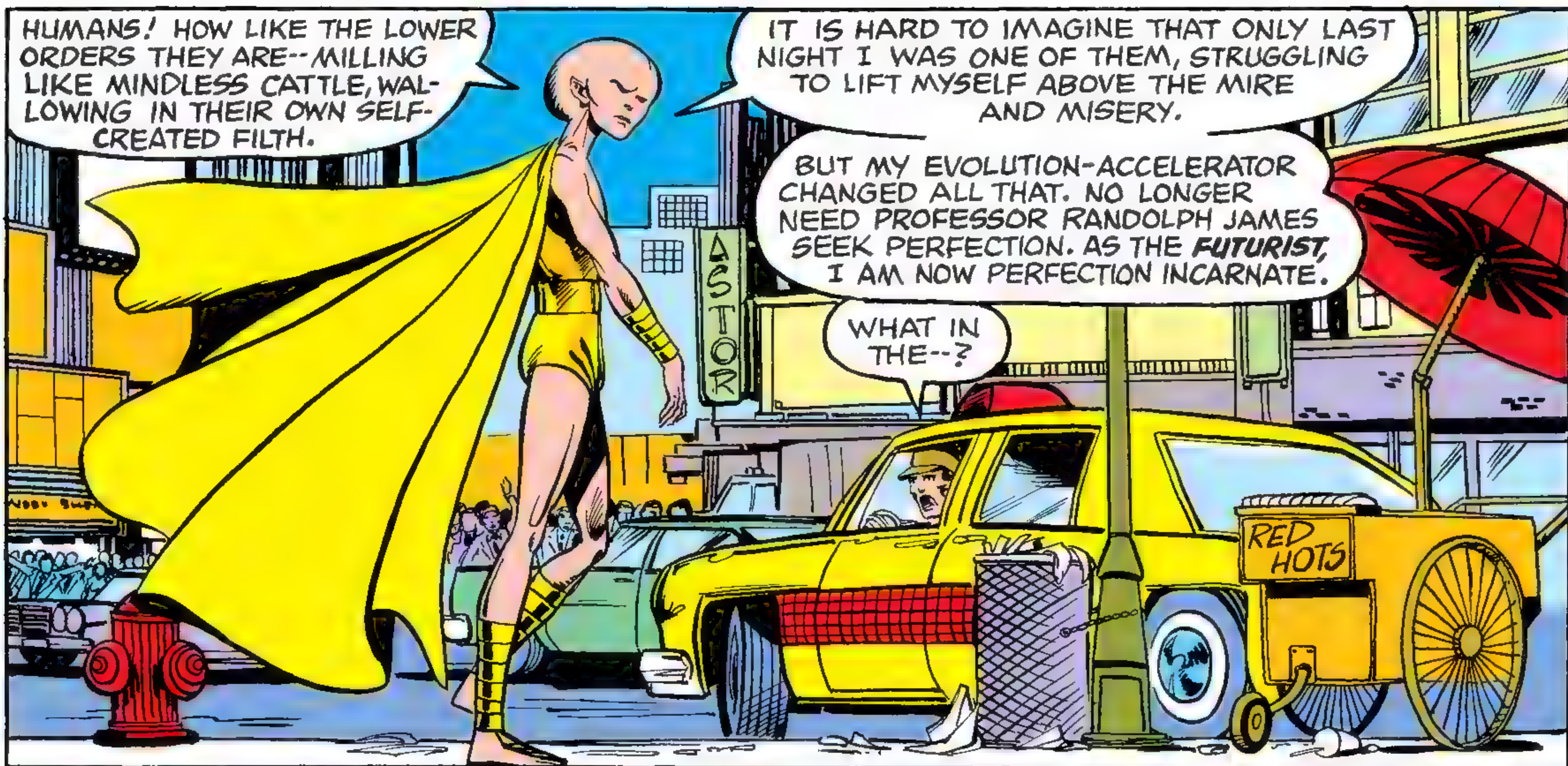
WHO--
WHAT IS
HE?!? WHAT
DOES HE
WANT?

HE'S HEADED
TOWARD THE
BAXTER
BUILDING!

A MATTER
OF LIFE
OR DEATH
SMOKE

BUT IS HE--IT--
A FRIEND OF THE FF'S
OR ANOTHER FOE, OUT
TO DESTROY THEM
AND THE CITY!

YOU ASK HIM! ME, I'M
GETTIN' OUTTA HERE!

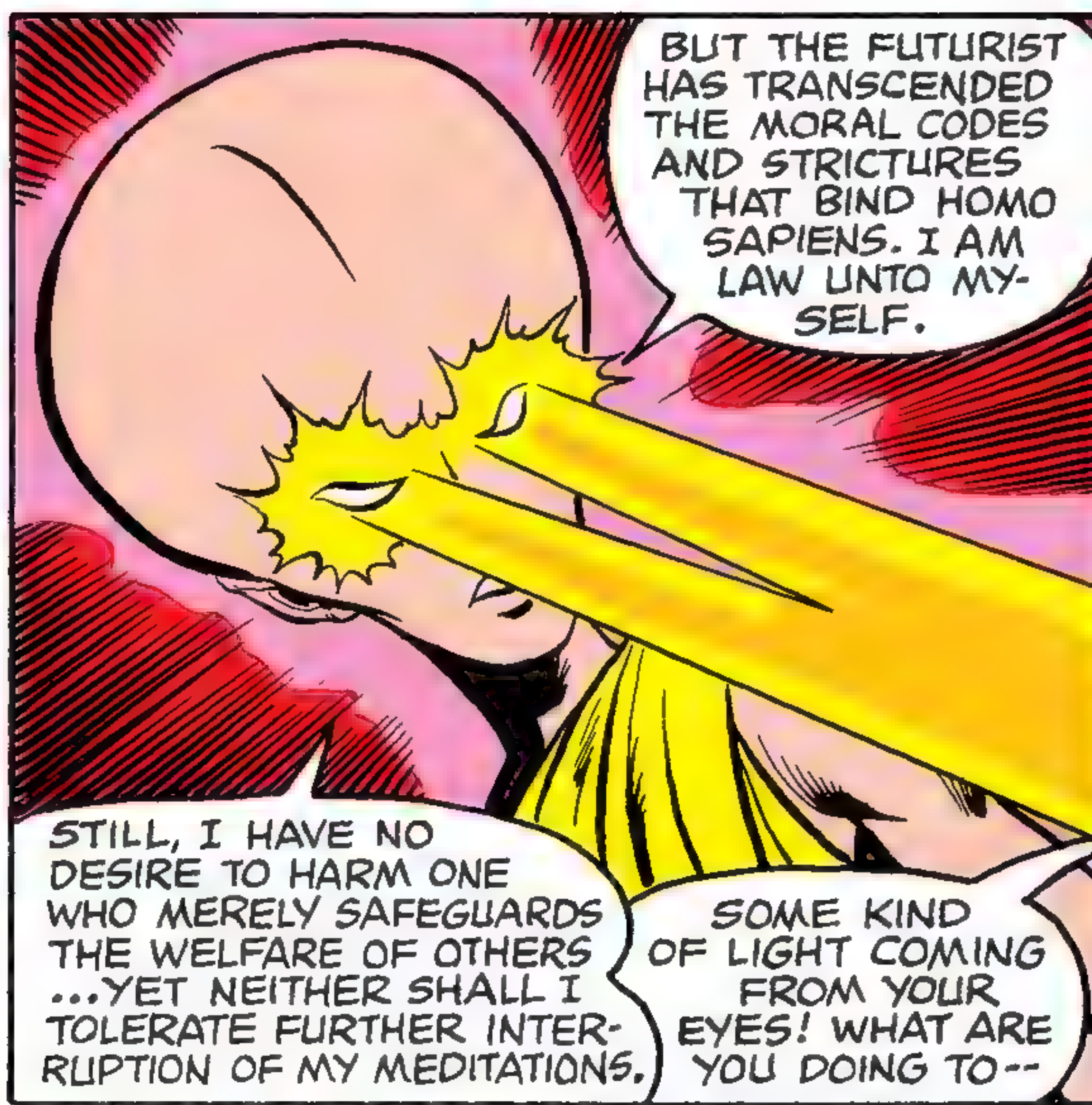




YEAH, AND WHAT YOU "ARE" IS GONNA BE BEHIND BARS! I SAW WHAT YOU DID TO THOSE KIDS--IT WAS HORRIBLE, NO MATTER WHAT THE PROVOCATION! I'M TAKING YOU IN--

--FOR FIRST DEGREE SOMETHING!

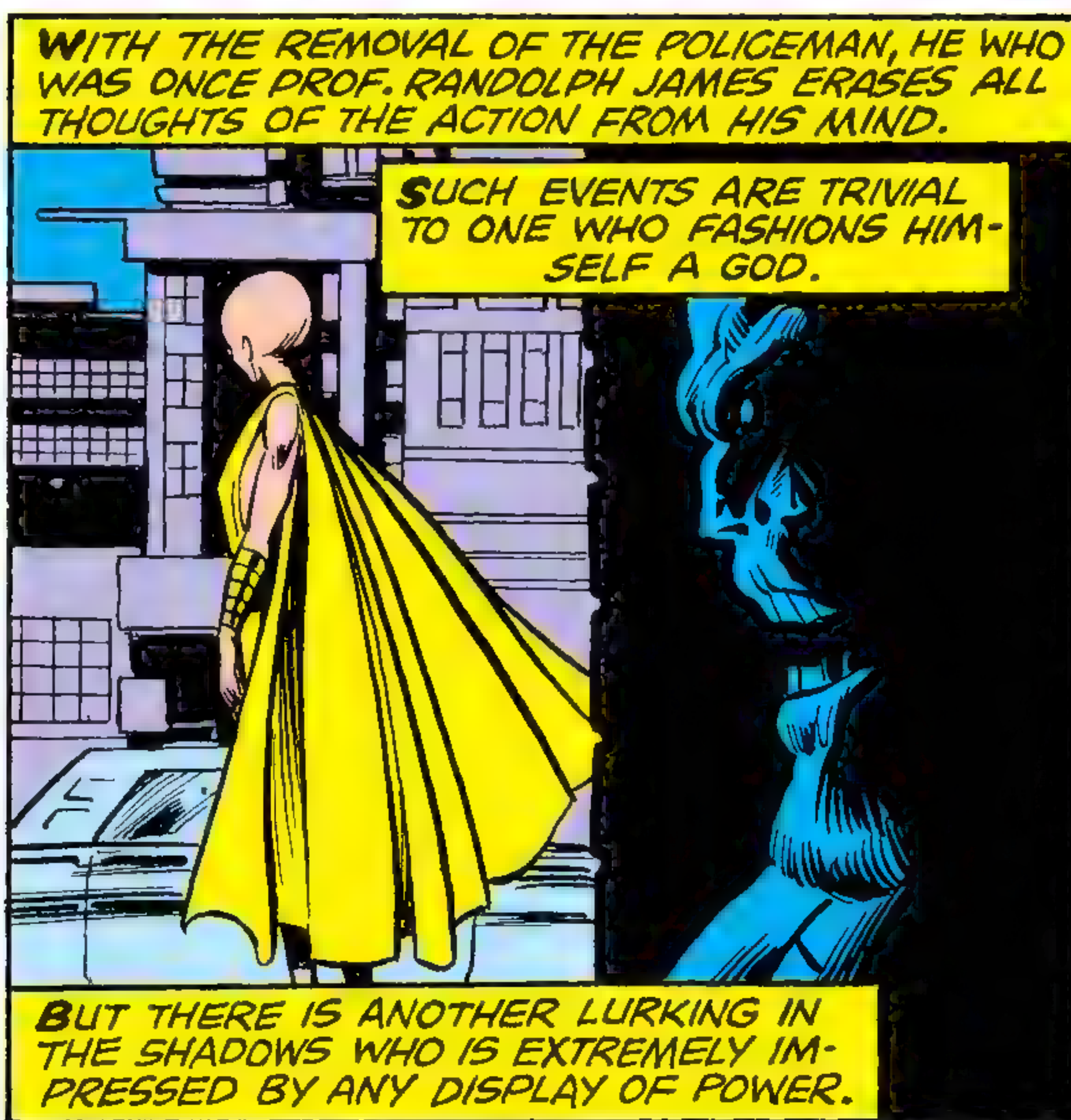
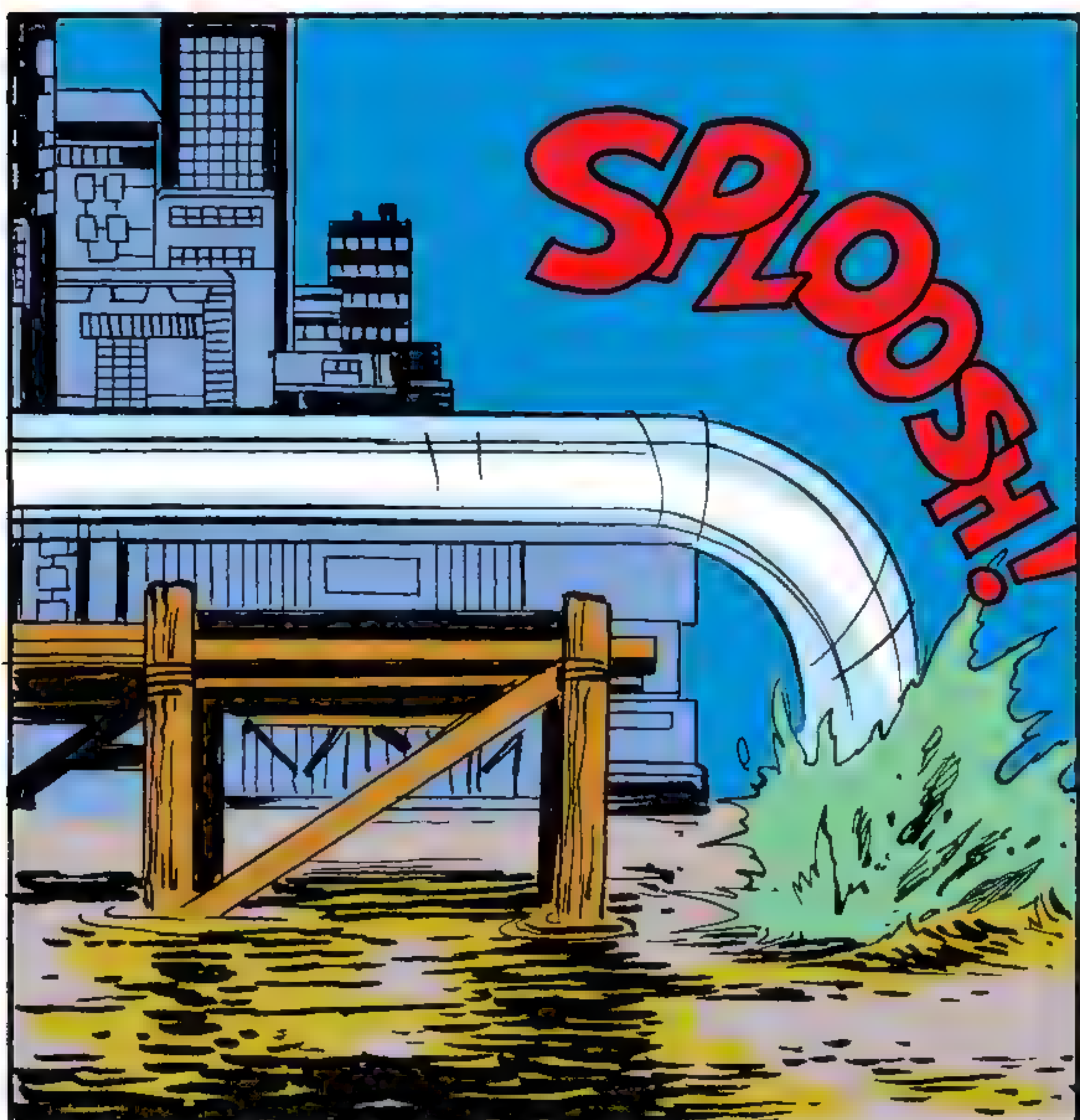
A PEACE ENFORCER--INFORMING ME OF THE LEGALITIES BY WHICH MEN MUST ABIDE?



BUT THE FUTURIST HAS TRANSCENDED THE MORAL CODES AND STRICTURES THAT BIND HOMO SAPIENS. I AM LAW UNTO MYSELF.

STILL, I HAVE NO DESIRE TO HARM ONE WHO MERELY SAFEGUARDS THE WELFARE OF OTHERS ...YET NEITHER SHALL I TOLERATE FURTHER INTERRUPTION OF MY MEDITATIONS.

SOME KIND OF LIGHT COMING FROM YOUR EYES! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO--



WITH THE REMOVAL OF THE POLICEMAN, HE WHO WAS ONCE PROF. RANDOLPH JAMES ERASES ALL THOUGHTS OF THE ACTION FROM HIS MIND.

SUCH EVENTS ARE TRIVIAL TO ONE WHO FASHIONS HIMSELF A GOD.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER LURKING IN THE SHADOWS WHO IS EXTREMELY IMPRESSED BY ANY DISPLAY OF POWER.



FOR WHAT IS **BLASTAAR** --THE LIVING **BOMBBURST** IF NOT SAVAGE POWER UNLEASHED?

WHAT WONDERMENT IS THIS? A HUMANOID--EXHIBITING SUCH MIGHT AS TO DWARF EVEN MY EXPLOSIVE ENERGIES!

YET HE WIELDS THEM NAIVELY--AS A CHILD WOULD--HEEDLESS OF GAIN, WITHOUT A GOAL!

THERE IS MUCH I COULD HOPE TO GAIN WERE I TO POSSESS SUCH POWERS! EVER SINCE MY MYSTERIOUS RELEASE FROM THE NEGATIVE ZONE I HAVE BEEN A FUGITIVE--

--SKULKING IN SHADOWS, HIDING FROM THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

IF I COULD TRICK THIS SUPER-BEING WHO CALLS HIMSELF THE FUTURIST INTO ADDING HIS MIGHT TO MINE, THEN COULD THE HUNTED BECOME THE HUNTER--

--AND BANISH THE ACCURSED FANTASTIC FOUR TO THAT VERY SHADOW REALM WHICH HAD BEEN MY DREARY HOME!

WITH SILENT STEALTH BELIED BY HIS MASSIVE SIZE, THE LIVING BOMBBURST MOVES AFTER THE UNSUSPECTING FUTURIST!

MEANWHILE, HIGH IN THE SKY ABOVE MANHATTAN...

RANDOLPH SAID HE'D ACCOMPANY ME BACK TO THE BAXTER BUILDING... BUT THEN VANISHED!

I'M WORRIED. HE'S LIKE A CHILD PLAYING WITH A NEW TOY!

LIKE A CHILD, HE'S ALSO IRRESPONSIBLE!

THAT IRRESPONSIBILITY HAS ALREADY RESULTED IN THE DEVOLUTION OF THREE MEN.* NO TELLING WHAT HE'LL DO NEXT!

*LAST ISSUE.--M.

HE'S GOT TO BE FOUND ...AND FAST!

STRETCHING HIS ELASTIC BODY DOWN FROM THE BAXTER BUILDING'S ROOF, THE LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR JOINS HIS WIFE, SON, BEST FRIEND AND BROTHER-IN-LAW IN THE FF'S COMMAND CENTER...

REED! I'VE BEEN ON THE HORN ALL NIGHT TO THE AVENGERS, S.H.I.E.L.D., THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS! AIN'T NOBODY SEEN OUR OLD BUDDY, BLASTAAR!

WHAT'S UP, REED?

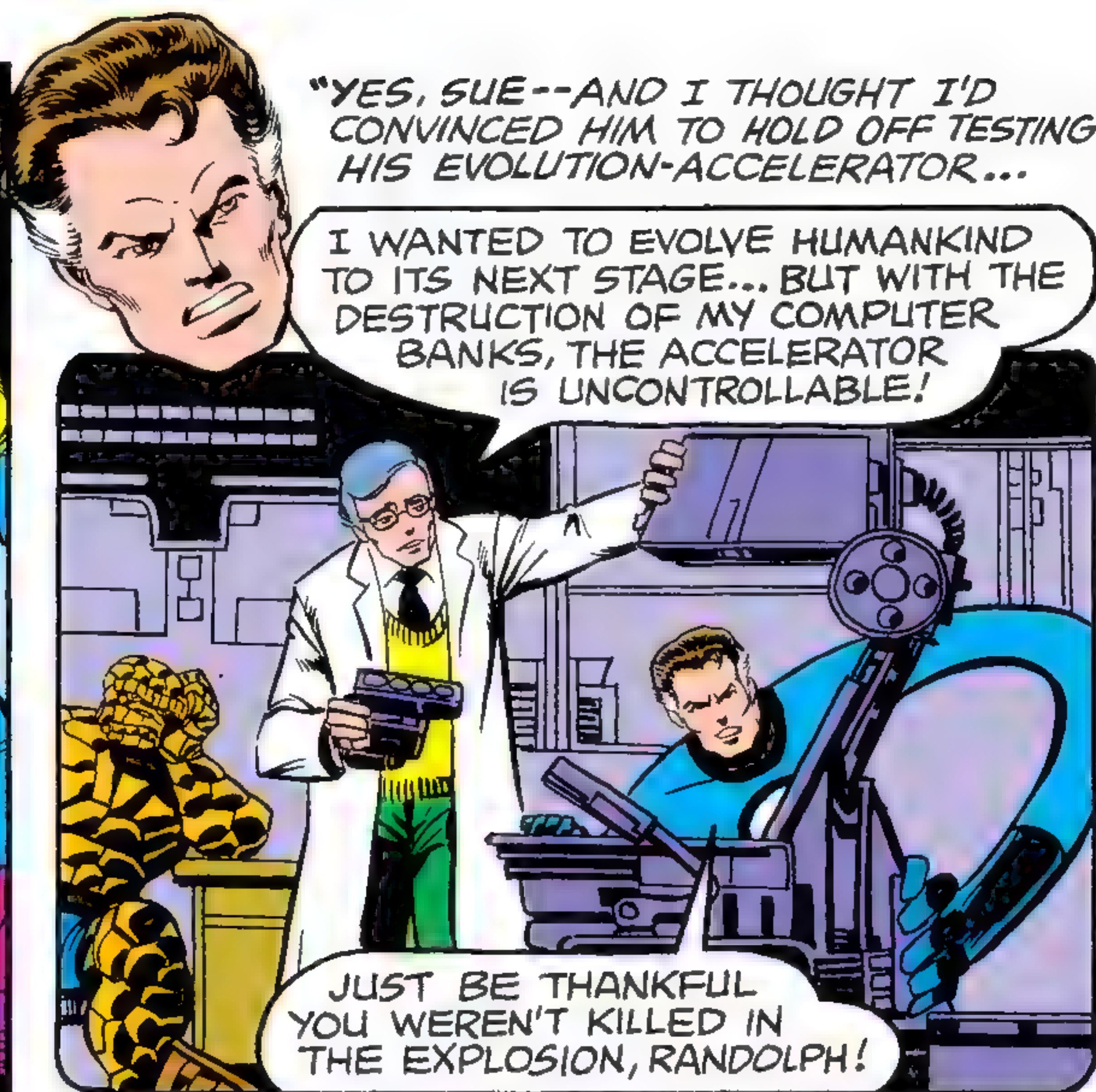
I WISH BLASTAAR WERE OUR ONLY PROBLEM RIGHT NOW, BEN!

HUH? YA MEAN ONE AIN'T ENOUGH FOR US?



IT'S MY FRIEND RANDOLPH JAMES! I'M AFRAID HE'S DONE SOMETHING INCREDIBLY FOOLISH!

BUT WE LEFT HIM JUST LAST EVENING, REED! HE WAS ALL RIGHT THEN, DESPITE THE FREAK ACCIDENT THAT DEMOLISHED HIS LAB!



"YES, SUE--AND I THOUGHT I'D CONVINCED HIM TO HOLD OFF TESTING HIS EVOLUTION-ACCELERATOR...

I WANTED TO EVOLVE HUMANKIND TO ITS NEXT STAGE... BUT WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF MY COMPUTER BANKS, THE ACCELERATOR IS UNCONTROLLABLE!

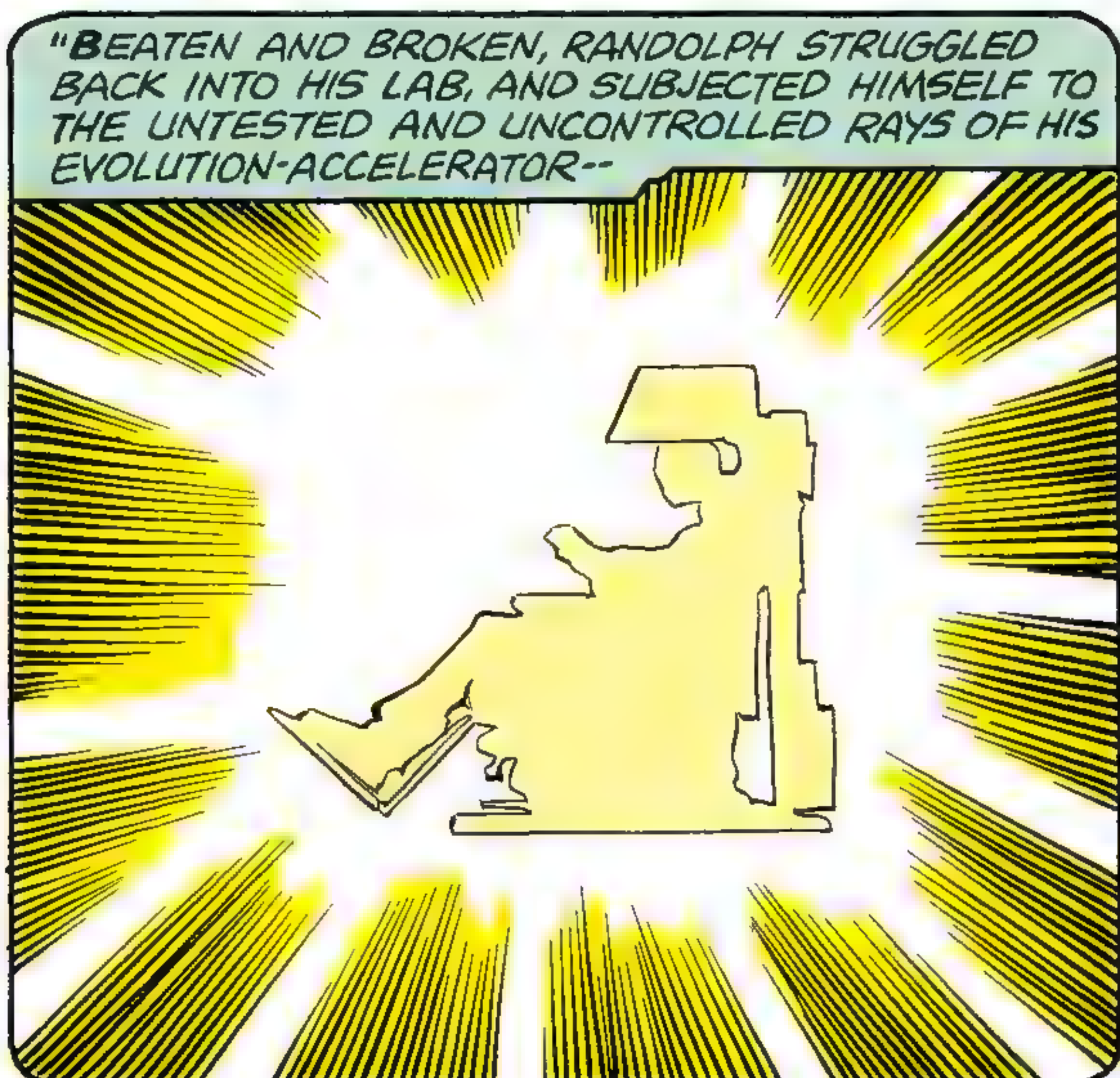
JUST BE THANKFUL YOU WEREN'T KILLED IN THE EXPLOSION, RANDOLPH!



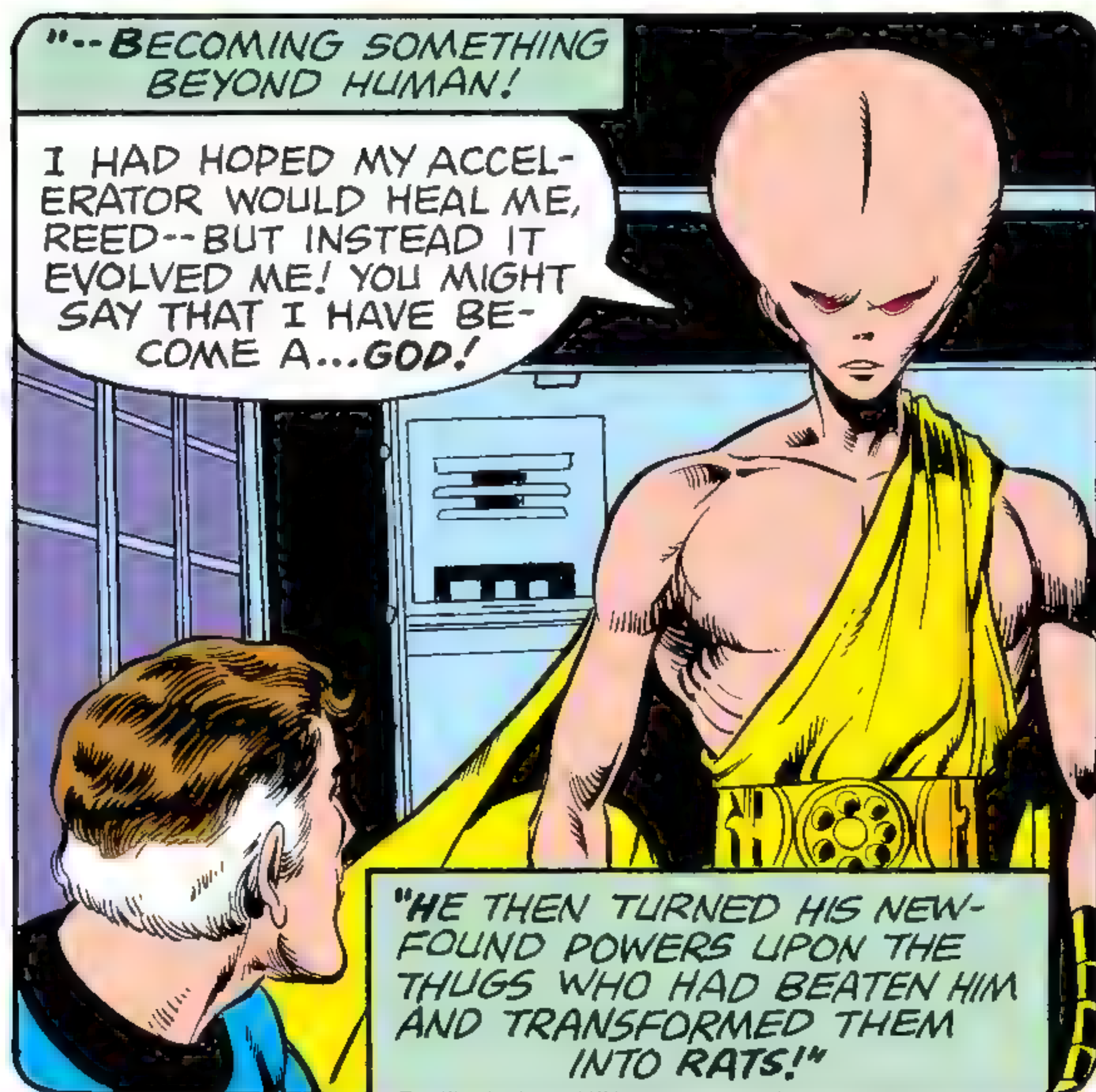
"WE HAD TO LEAVE THEN, TO HANDLE BLASTAAR'S UNFORESEEN EMERGENCE FROM THE NEGATIVE ZONE. IN OUR WAKE RANDOLPH WAS ATTACKED BY A GANG OF THUGS...

B-BUT, I TELL YOU, I HAVE NO MONEY!

QUIT LYIN', DOC! ALL YOU SCIENTIST TYPES ARE LOADED!



"BEATEN AND BROKEN, RANDOLPH STRUGGLED BACK INTO HIS LAB, AND SUBJECTED HIMSELF TO THE UNTESTED AND UNCONTROLLED RAYS OF HIS EVOLUTION-ACCELERATOR--



"--BECOMING SOMETHING BEYOND HUMAN!

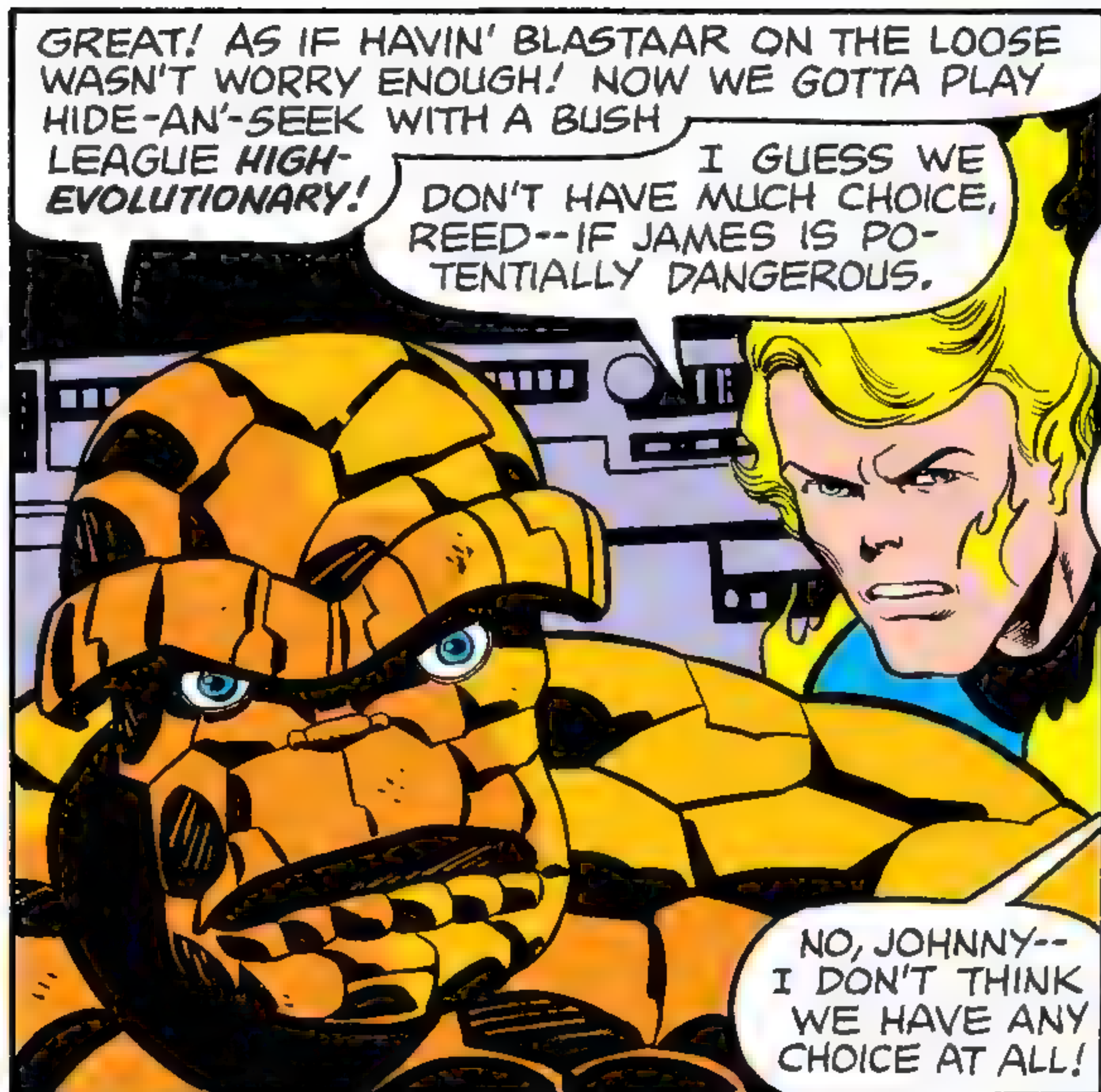
I HAD HOPED MY ACCELERATOR WOULD HEAL ME, REED--BUT INSTEAD IT EVOLVED ME! YOU MIGHT SAY THAT I HAVE BECOME A...GOD!

"HE THEN TURNED HIS NEW-FOUND POWERS UPON THE THUGS WHO HAD BEATEN HIM AND TRANSFORMED THEM INTO RATS!"



I KNEW I HADN'T THE POWER TO FORCE HIM TO THE BAXTER BUILDING WHERE A WAY MIGHT BE FOUND TO REVERT HIM BACK TO HUMAN--SO I TRIED TO REASON WITH HIM, CONVINCE HIM TO COME WITH ME OF HIS OWN FREE WILL!

BUT ON THE WAY HERE, HE GREW IMPATIENT...AND VANISHED! I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR HIM EVER SINCE!



GREAT! AS IF HAVIN' BLASTAAR ON THE LOOSE WASN'T WORRY ENOUGH! NOW WE GOTTA PLAY HIDE-AN-SEEK WITH A BUSH LEAGUE HIGH-EVOLUTIONARY!

I GUESS WE DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE, REED--IF JAMES IS POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS.

NO, JOHNNY-- I DON'T THINK WE HAVE ANY CHOICE AT ALL!

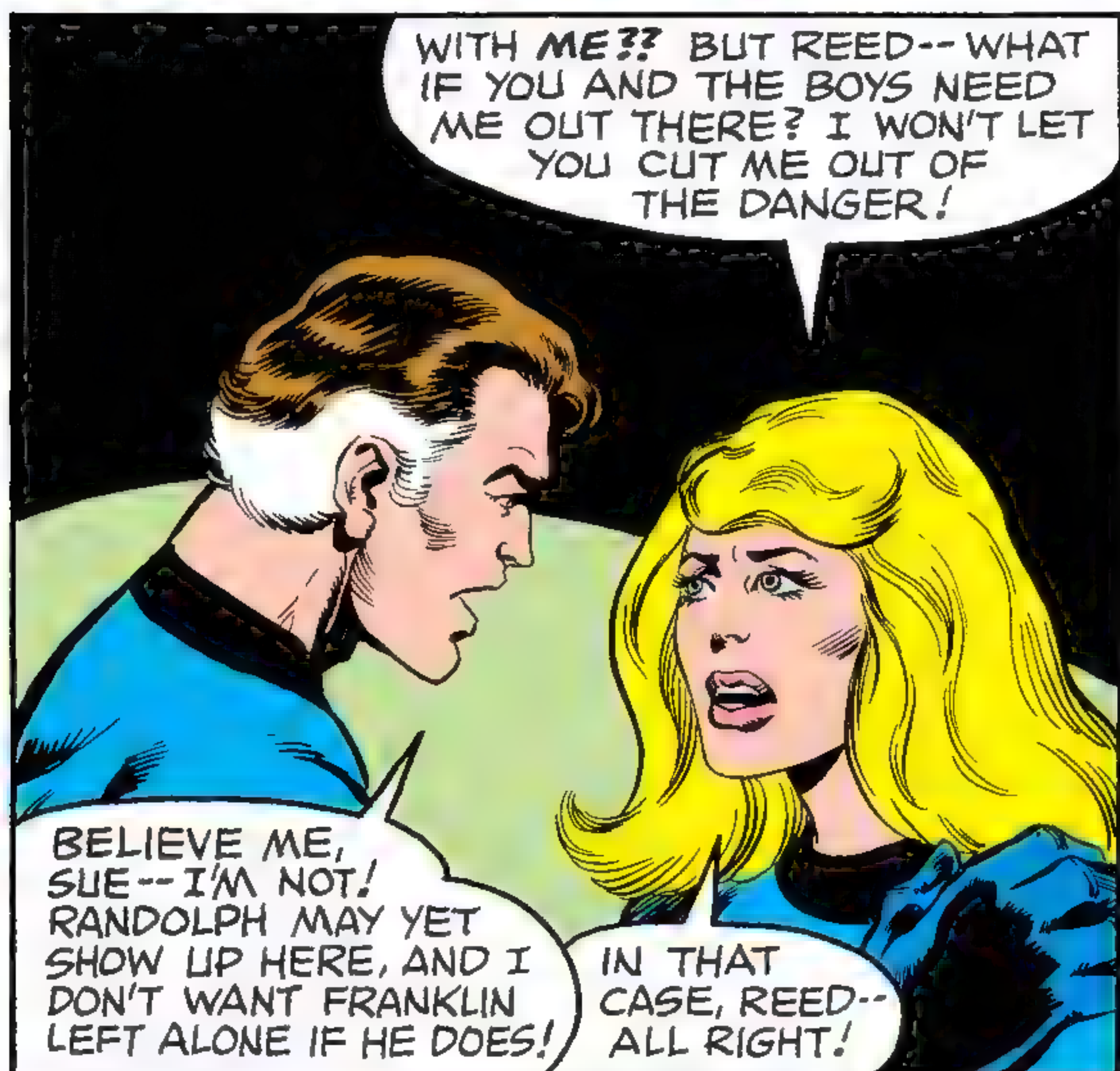


THEN WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?
FLAME ON!

SHEESH! THAT BLASTED BATTLE-CRY AIN'T GOT HALF THE CLASS OF "IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME"!

DADDY! I WANT TO GO WITH BEN AND JOHNNY!

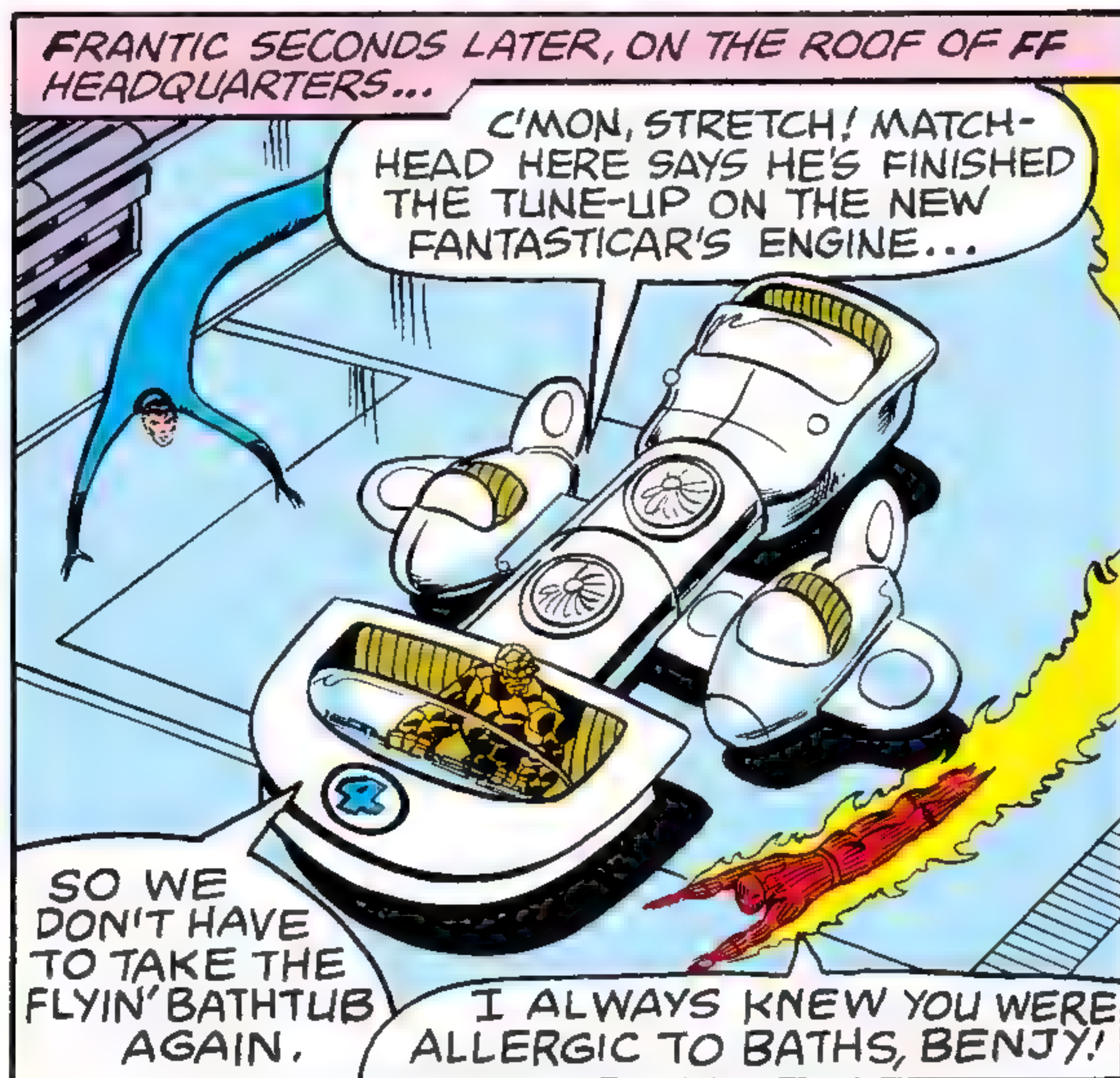
NO, FRANKLIN! I WANT YOU TO STAY HERE WITH YOUR MOTHER!



WITH ME?? BUT REED-- WHAT IF YOU AND THE BOYS NEED ME OUT THERE? I WON'T LET YOU CUT ME OUT OF THE DANGER!

BELIEVE ME, SUE-- I'M NOT! RANDOLPH MAY YET SHOW UP HERE, AND I DON'T WANT FRANKLIN LEFT ALONE IF HE DOES!

IN THAT CASE, REED-- ALL RIGHT!



FRANTIC SECONDS LATER, ON THE ROOF OF FF HEADQUARTERS...

C'MON, STRETCH! MATCH-HEAD HERE SAYS HE'S FINISHED THE TUNE-UP ON THE NEW FANTASTICAR'S ENGINE...

SO WE DON'T HAVE TO TAKE THE FLYIN' BATHTUB AGAIN.

I ALWAYS KNEW YOU WERE ALLERGIC TO BATHS, BENJY!



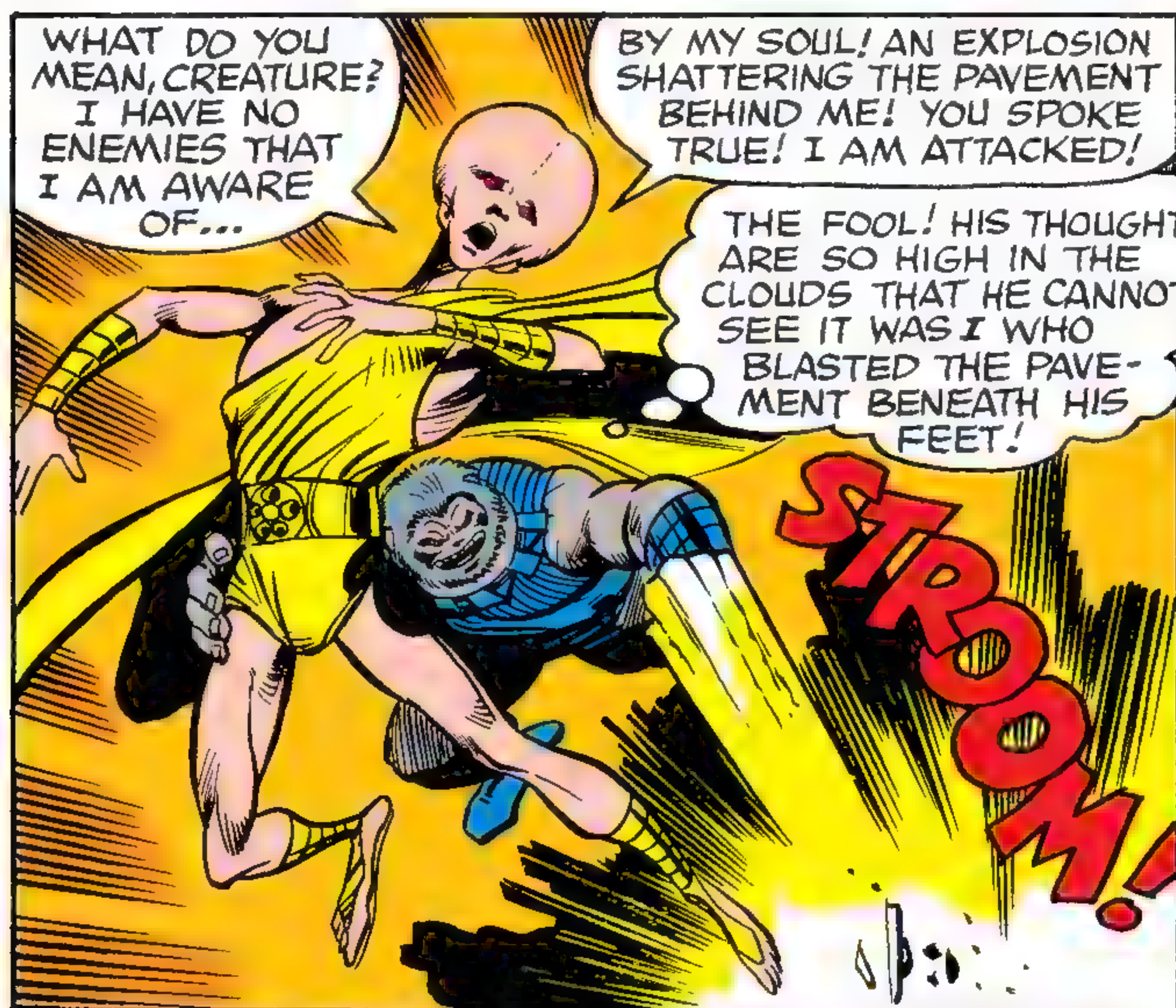
THIS IS NO TIME FOR JOKES, JOHNNY! THERE ARE TWO SUPER-POWERFUL BEINGS AT LARGE EACH WITH ENOUGH POWER TO DEVASTATE THIS CITY--AND WE'VE GOT TO FIND THEM BOTH BEFORE THEY DO!

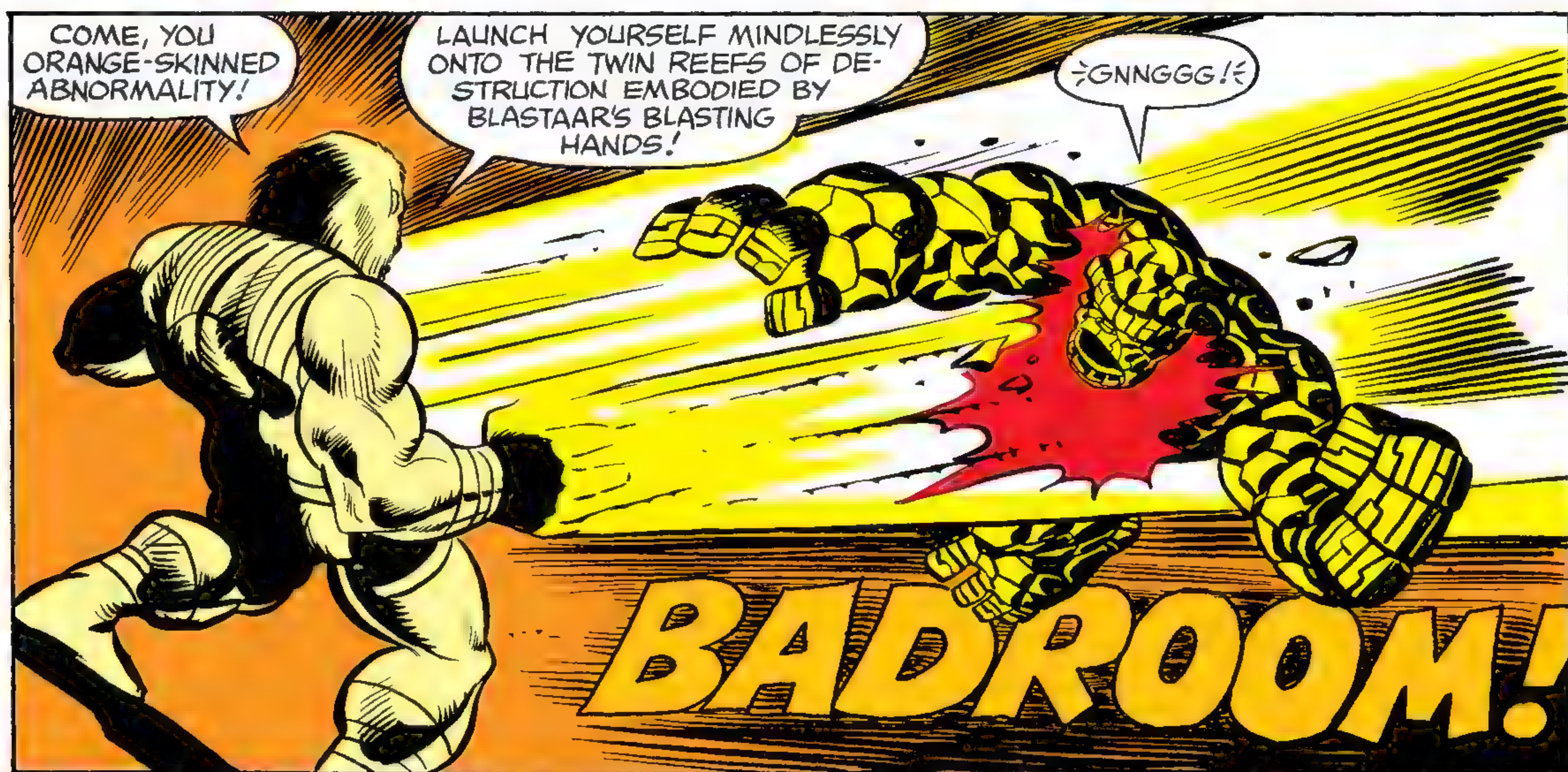
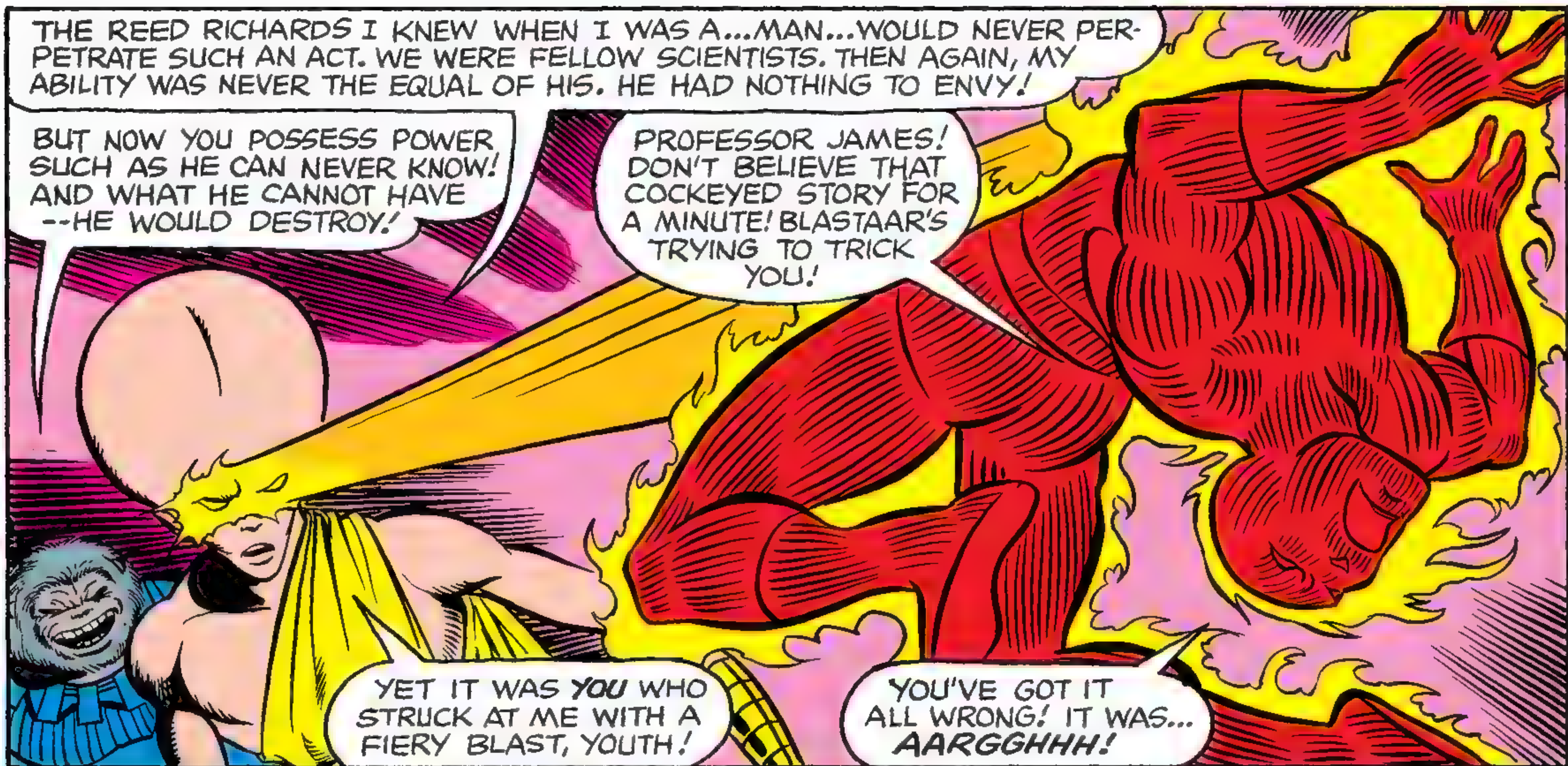
AW, LET THE KID TALK--IT'S THE ONLY WAY HE CAN GET UP ENOUGH HOT AIR TO KEEP HIMSELF FLYIN'!

FUNNY, ROCKPILE! SO FUNNY I FORGOT TO LAUGH!

BUT, WHILE BEN AND JOHNNY TRADE RETORTS--

--THE DUAL OBJECTS OF THEIR SEARCH ARE EVEN NOW UPON THE VERGE OF MEETING!





BEN AND JOHNNY ARE DOWN-- BUT, OUTSIDE OF HIS INITIAL REACTION TO WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS AN ATTACK, RANDOLPH HASN'T REENTERED THE FRAY! PERHAPS I CAN CONVINCE HIM NOT TO!

RANDOLPH-- IT'S ME: REED! I'M HERE TO HELP YOU!

HOW? BY DEVOLVING ME BACK TO A SECOND-RATE SCIENTIST WHOSE WORK WAS NEVER ANY THREAT TO YOUR OWN?

RANDOLPH, YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT TRUE! UNGGH!!

STROW!

I KNOW ONLY THAT YOU WOULD MAKE ME AGAIN THAT WHICH I WAS--AND WHICH I NO LONGER HAVE ANY WISH TO BE!

THE BATTLE GOES BETTER THAN I COULD HAVE DARED HOPE! MY UNWITTINGLY ALLY HAS BROUGHT TWO OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR TO THEIR KNEES! THAT LEAVES ONLY THE THING!

DO NOT BOTHER RISING, GARGOYLE! YOU WILL SOON FIND YOURSELF BLASTED BACK DOWN AGAIN-- PERMANENTLY!

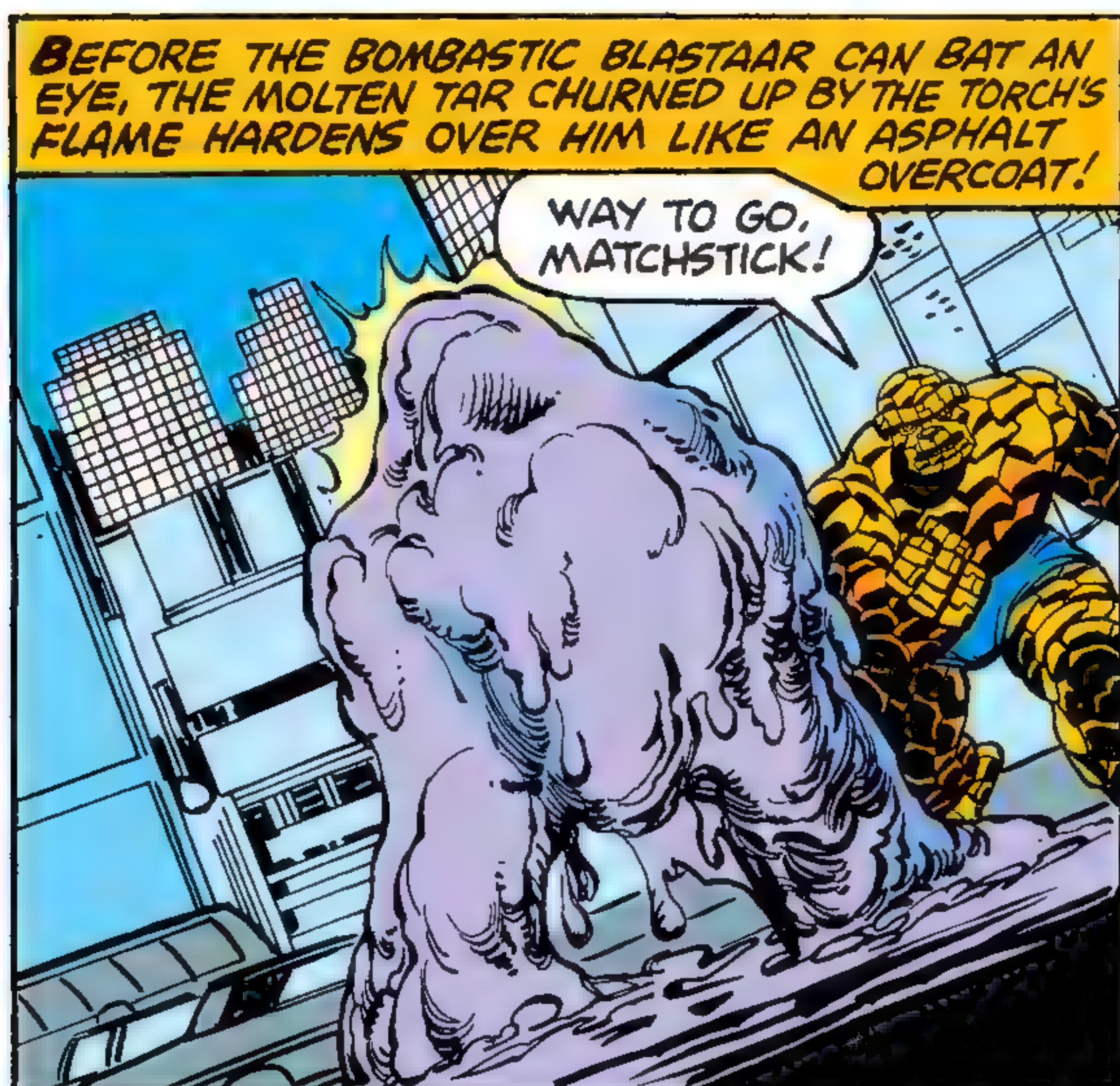
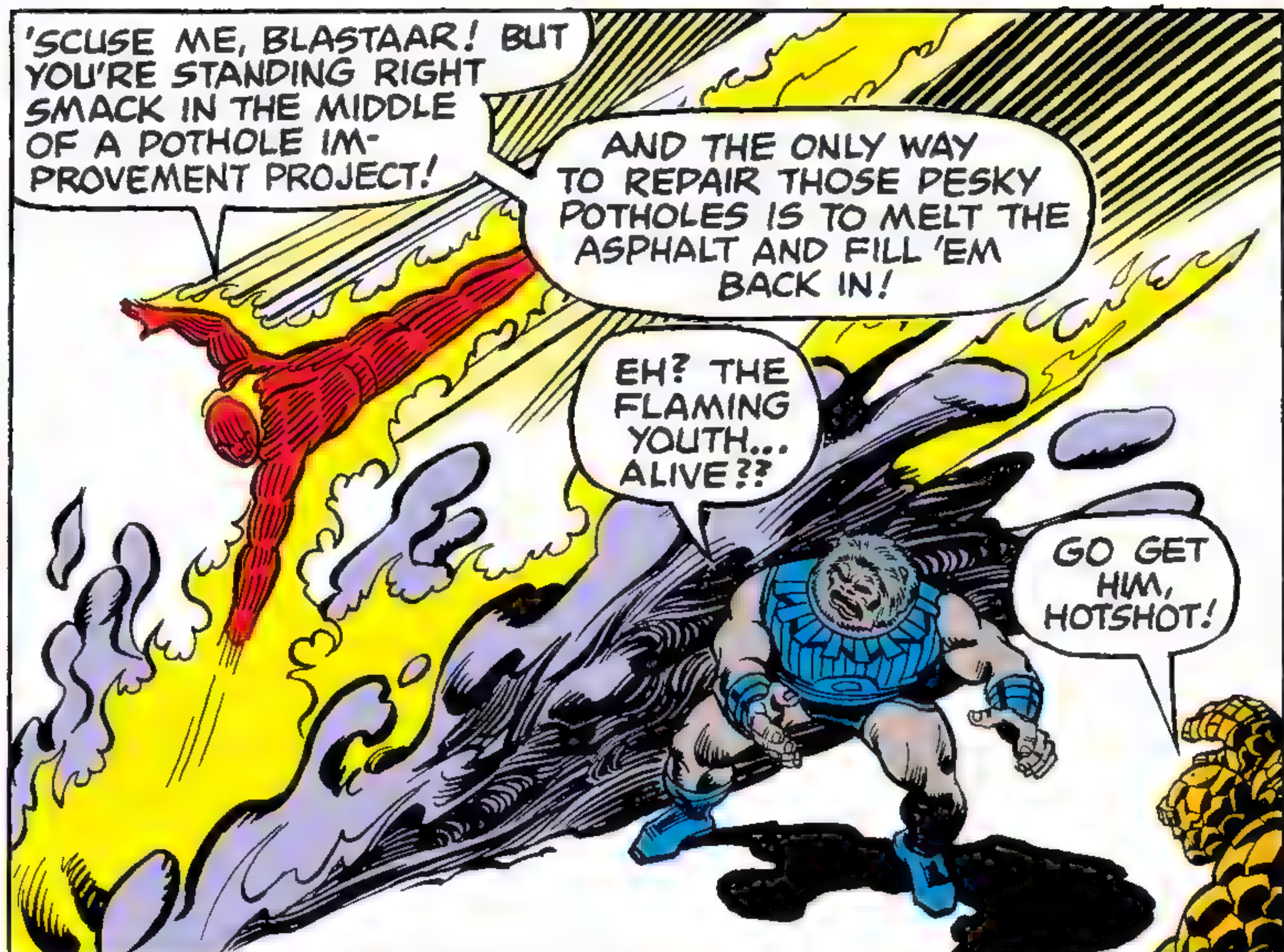
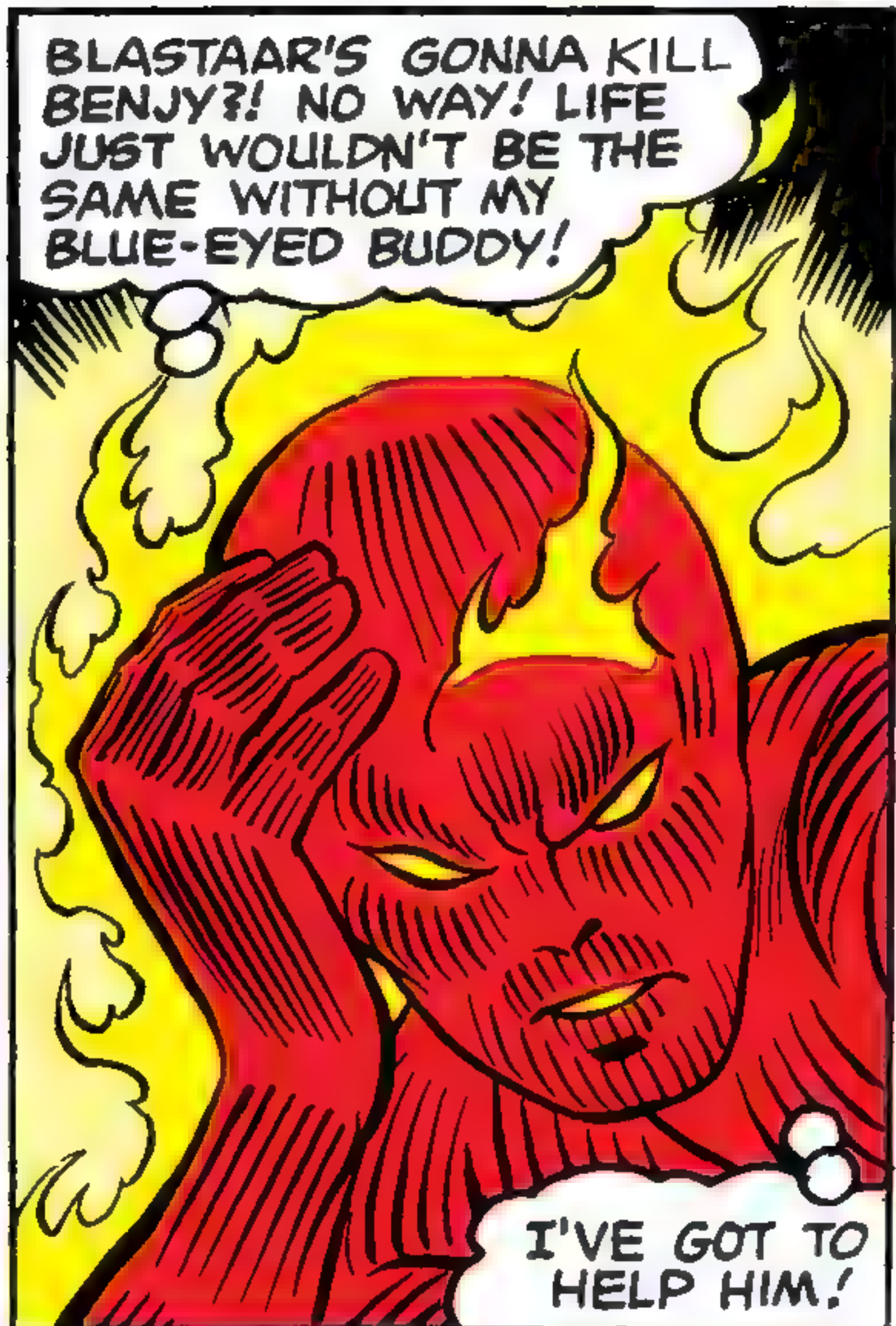
THERE'S ONLY TWO THINGS "PERMANENT" IN THIS LIFE, BLASTAAR-- TAXES AN' DEATH!

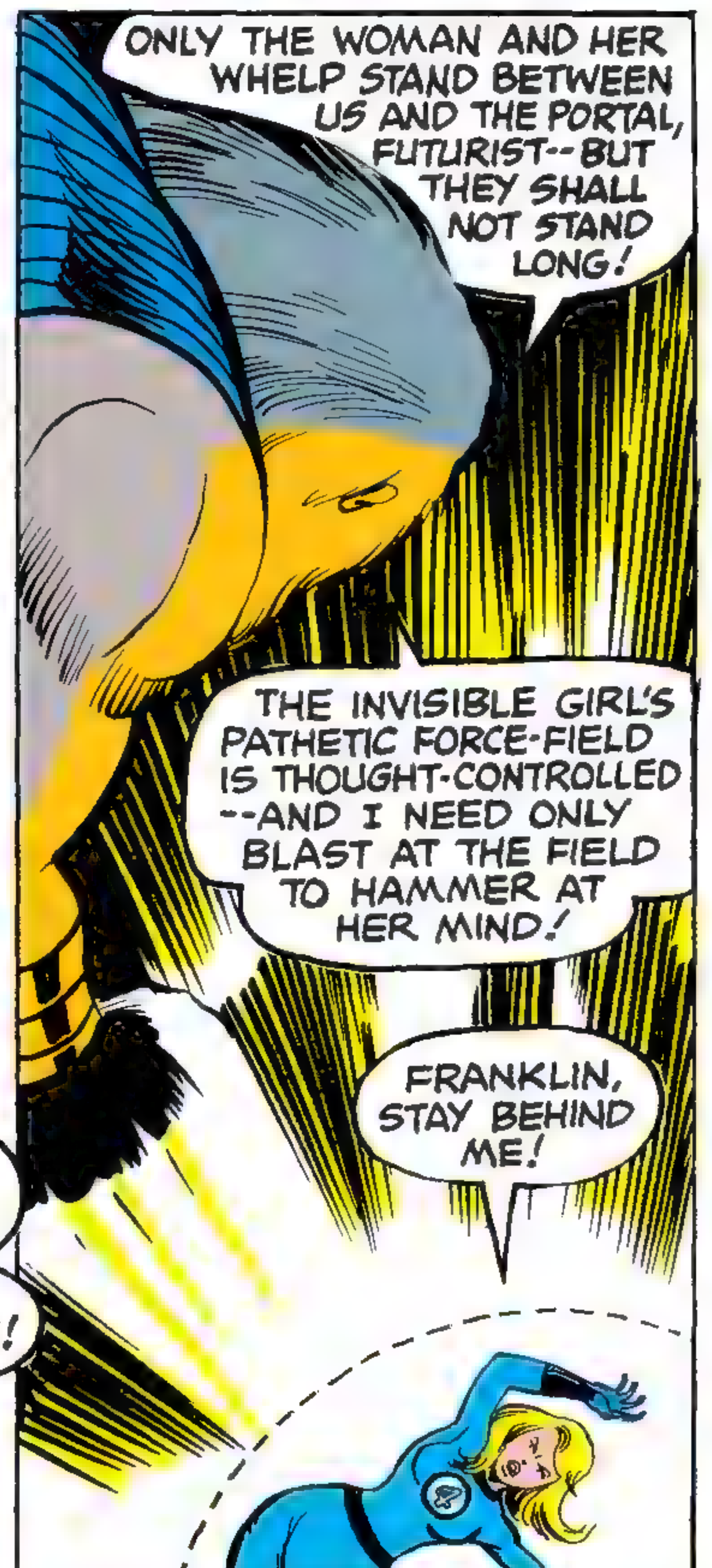
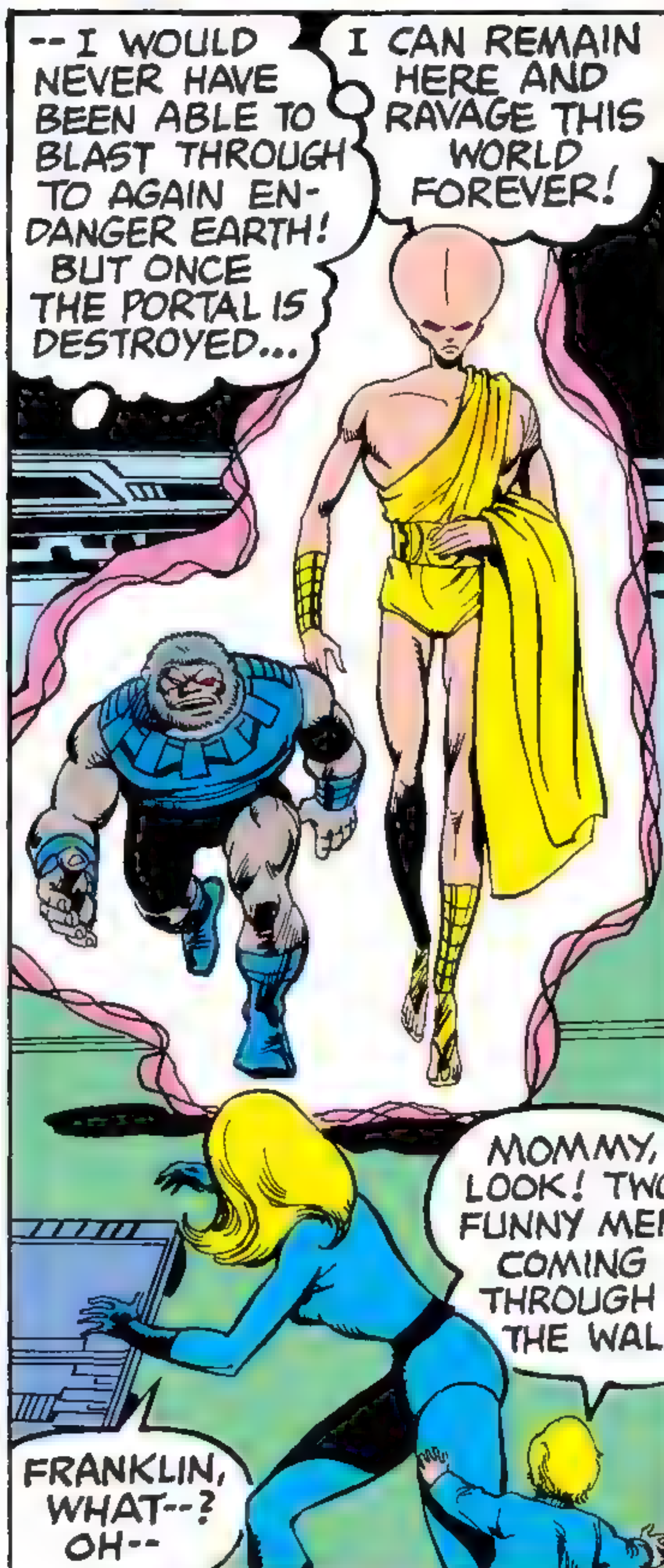
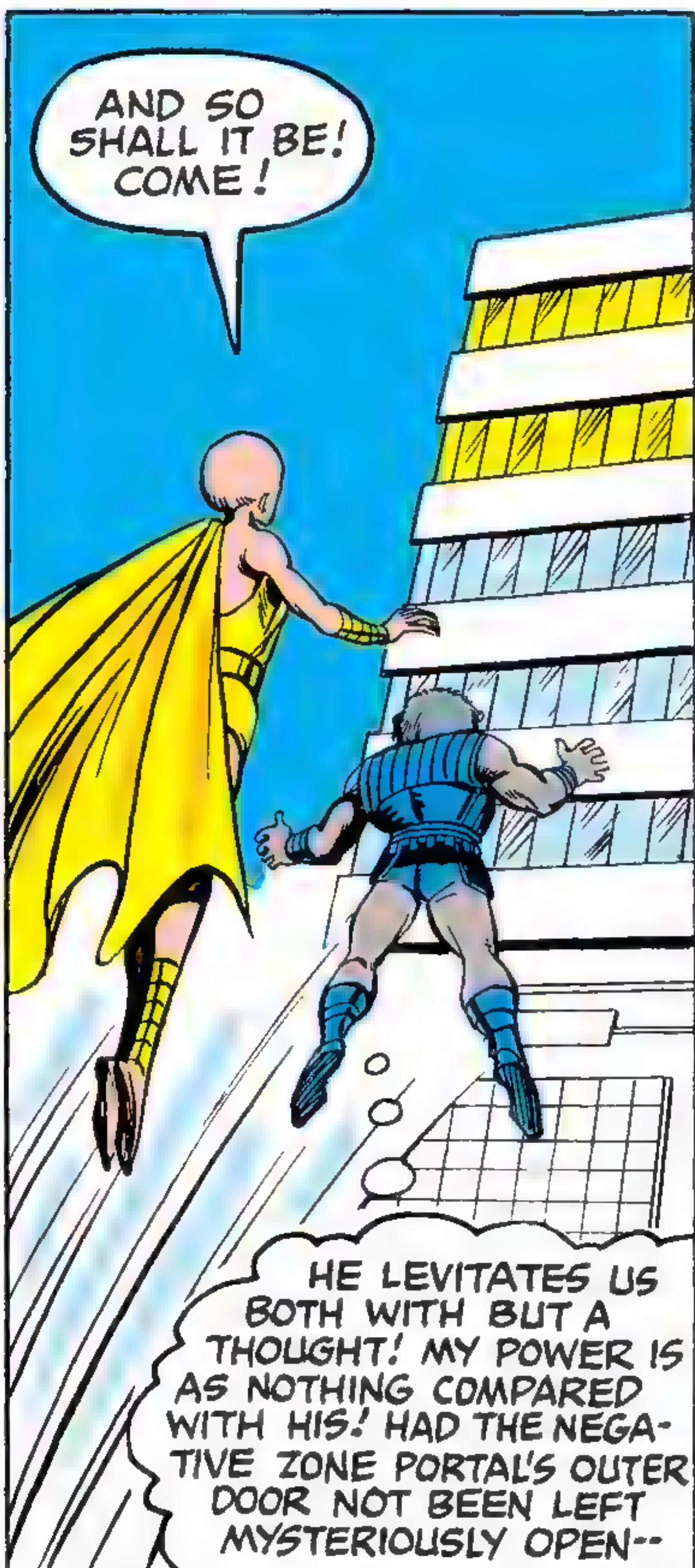
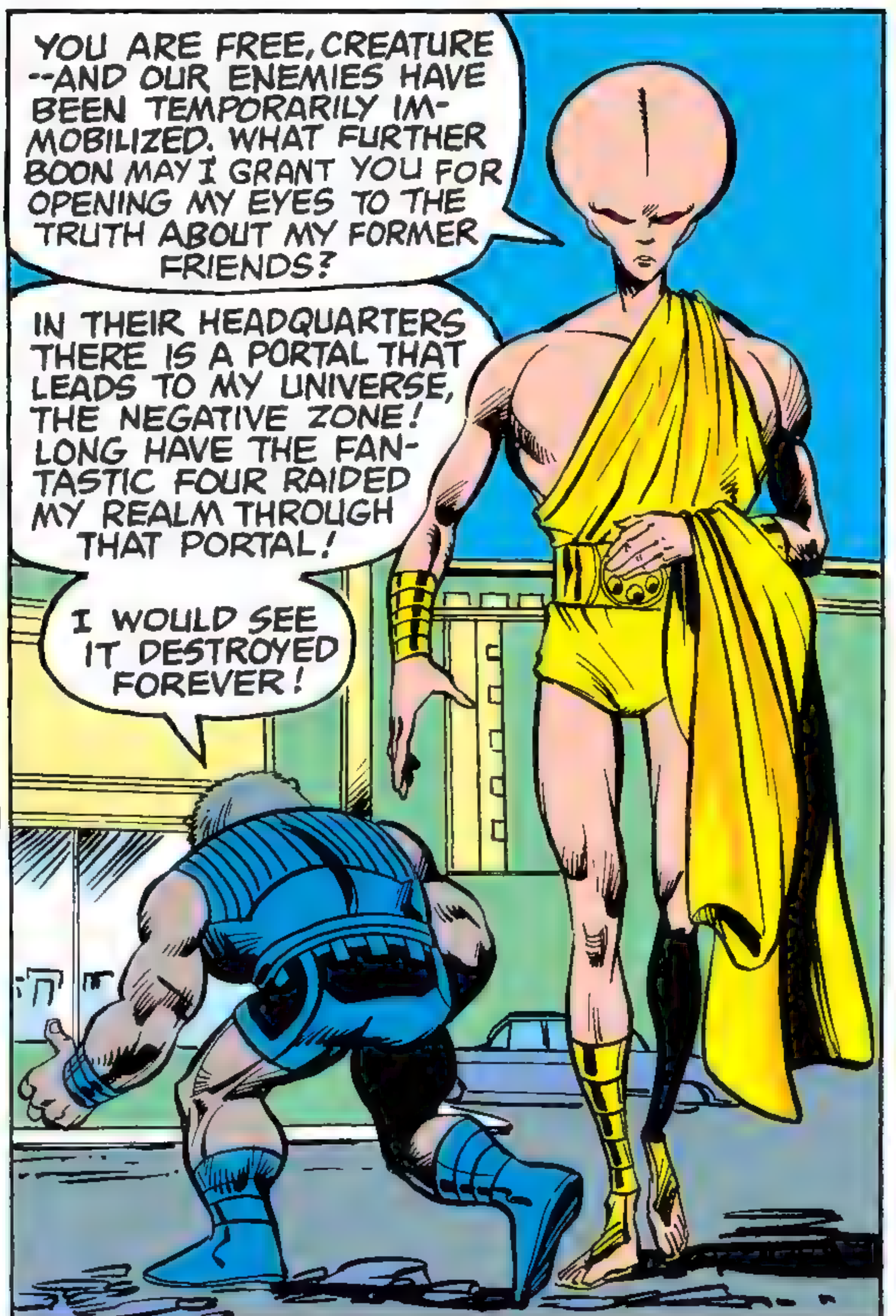
AN', SINCE YOU PROBABLY AIN'T NEVER HAD TO WORRY ABOUT TAXES IN THAT ANTI-MATTER UNIVERSE YOU COME FROM--

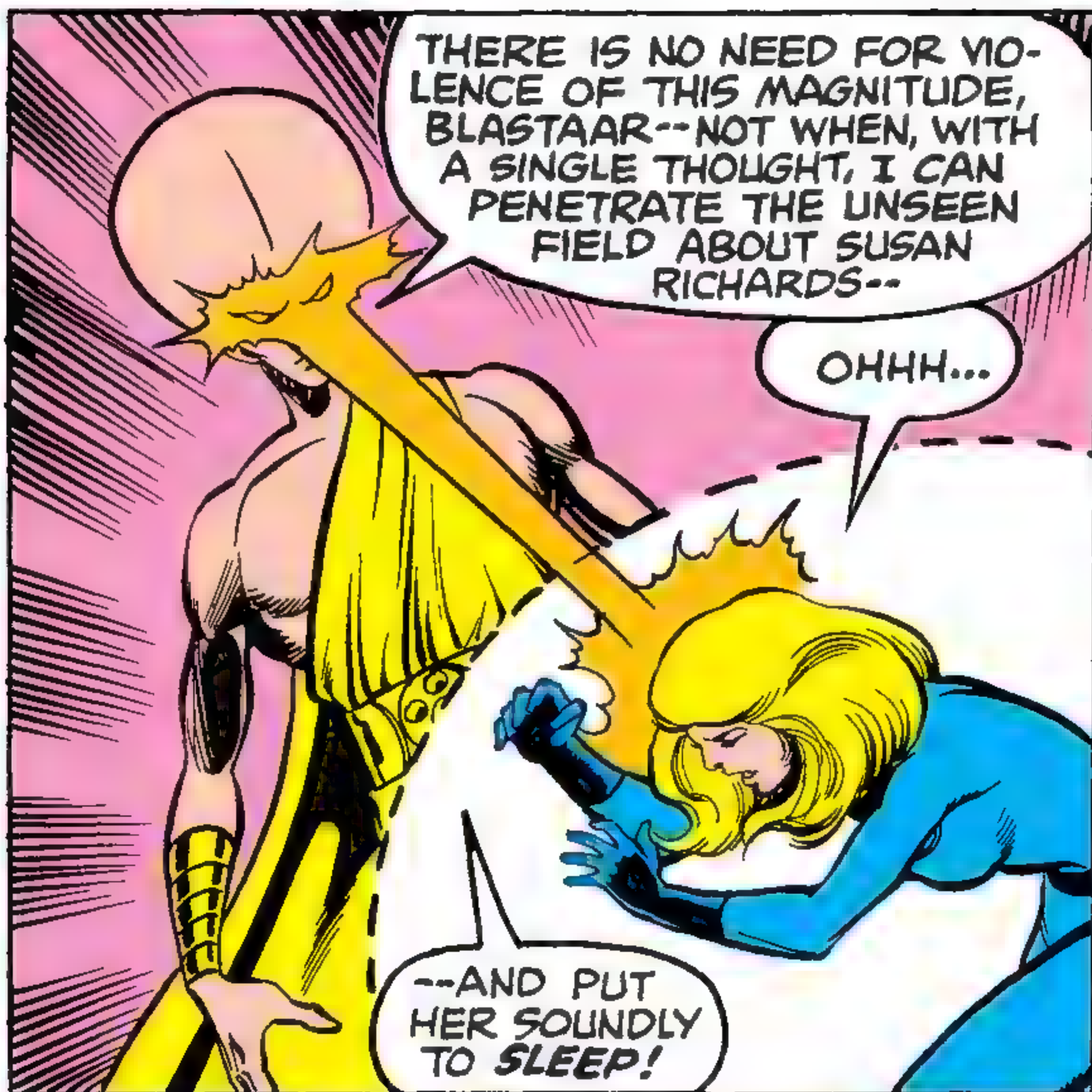
--I'M GONNA DOLE OUT A HEALTHY DOUBLE DOSE OF DOOM!

STROOM!

HAH! YOU LACK THE HEART TO DEAL DEATH, EVEN TO ONE SUCH AS I! BUT BLASTAAR HAS NO SUCH SCRUPLES!



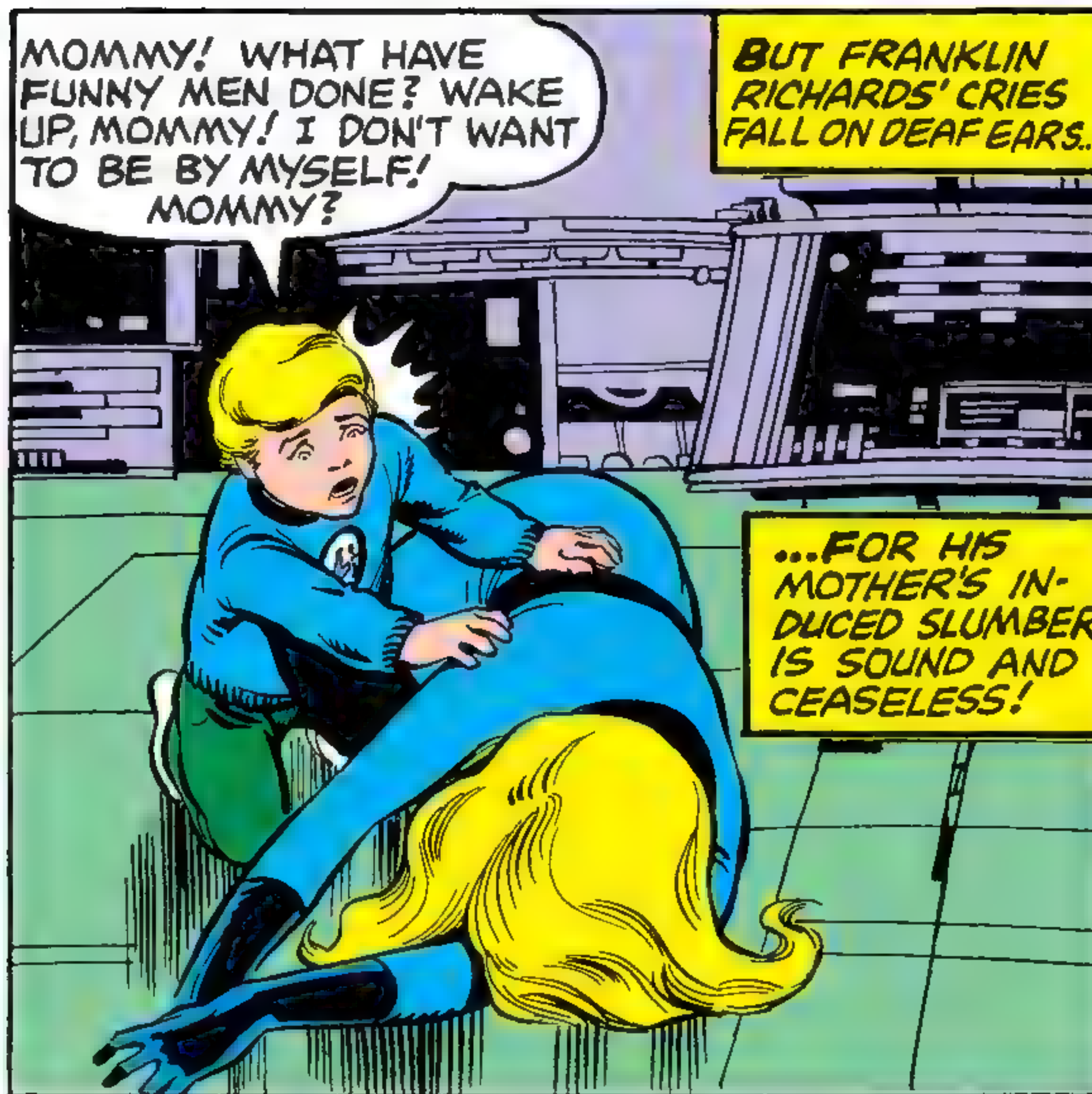




THERE IS NO NEED FOR VIOLENCE OF THIS MAGNITUDE, BLASTAAR--NOT WHEN, WITH A SINGLE THOUGHT, I CAN PENETRATE THE UNSEEN FIELD ABOUT SUSAN RICHARDS--

OHHH...

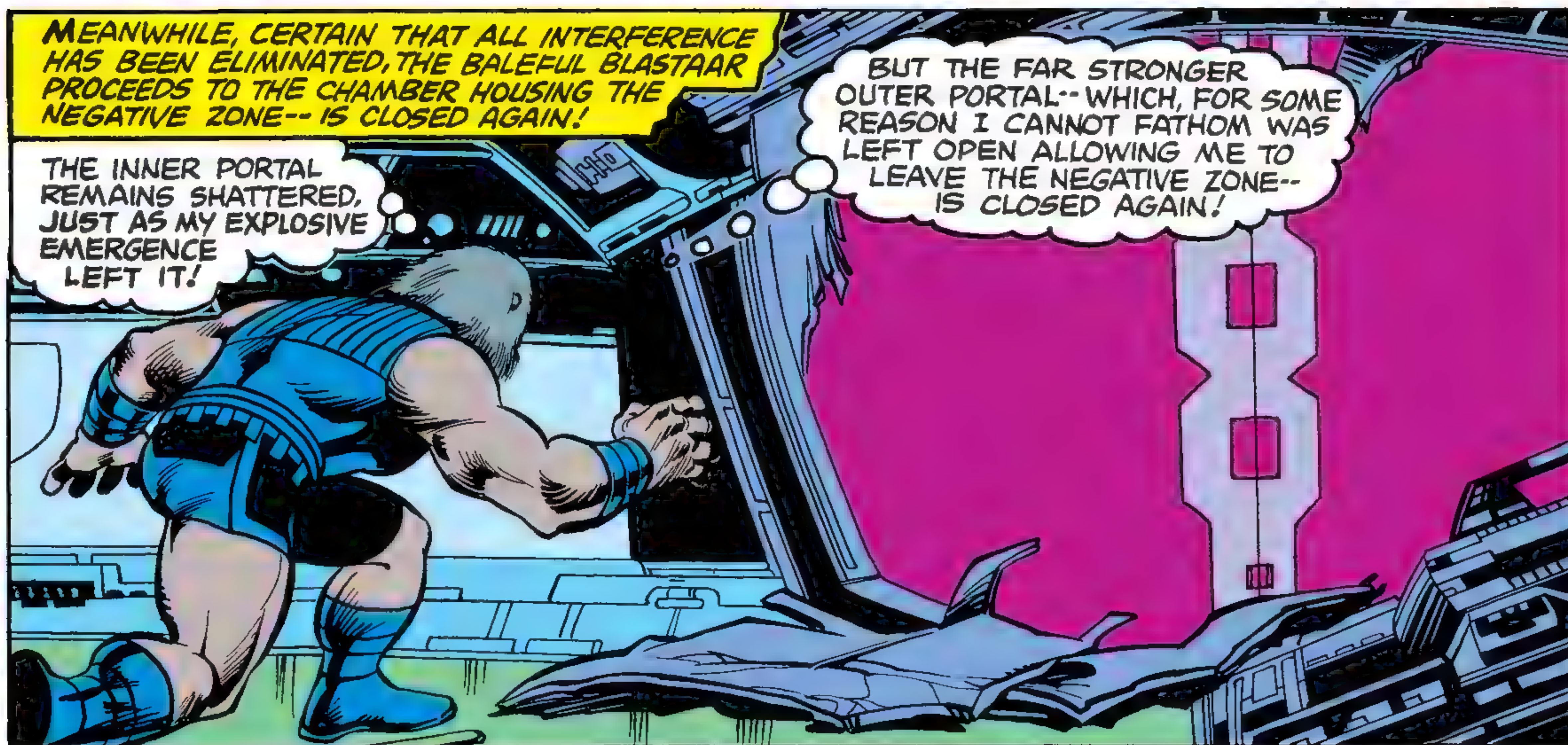
--AND PUT HER SOUNDLY TO SLEEP!



MOMMY! WHAT HAVE FUNNY MEN DONE? WAKE UP, MOMMY! I DON'T WANT TO BE BY MYSELF! MOMMY?

BUT FRANKLIN RICHARDS' CRIES FALL ON DEAF EARS...

...FOR HIS MOTHER'S INDUCED SLUMBER IS SOUND AND CEASELESS!



MEANWHILE, CERTAIN THAT ALL INTERFERENCE HAS BEEN ELIMINATED, THE BALEFUL BLASTAAR PROCEEDS TO THE CHAMBER HOUSING THE NEGATIVE ZONE-- IS CLOSED AGAIN!

THE INNER PORTAL REMAINS SHATTERED, JUST AS MY EXPLOSIVE EMERGENCE LEFT IT!

BUT THE FAR STRONGER OUTER PORTAL--WHICH, FOR SOME REASON I CANNOT FATHOM WAS LEFT OPEN ALLOWING ME TO LEAVE THE NEGATIVE ZONE-- IS CLOSED AGAIN!



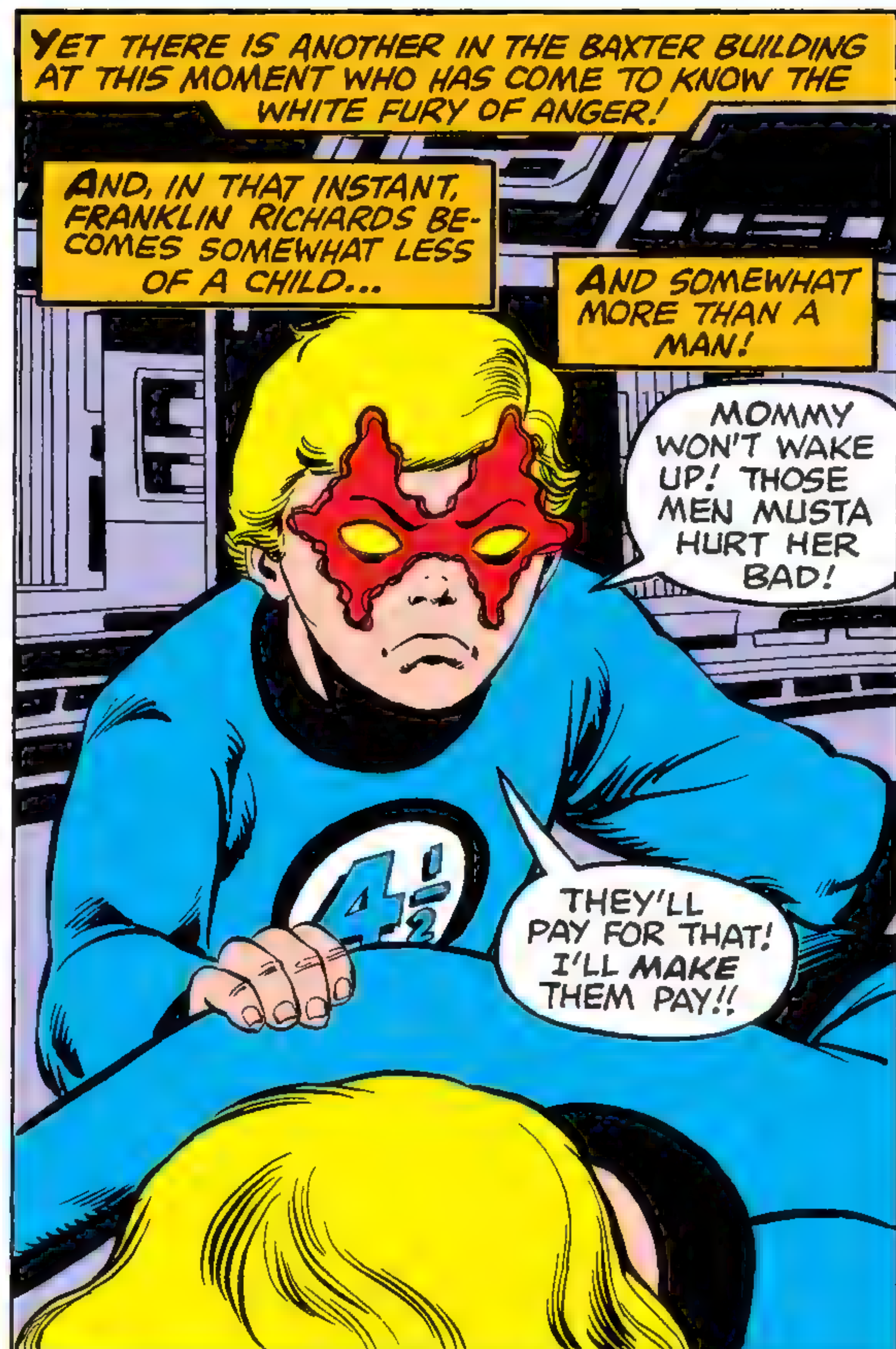
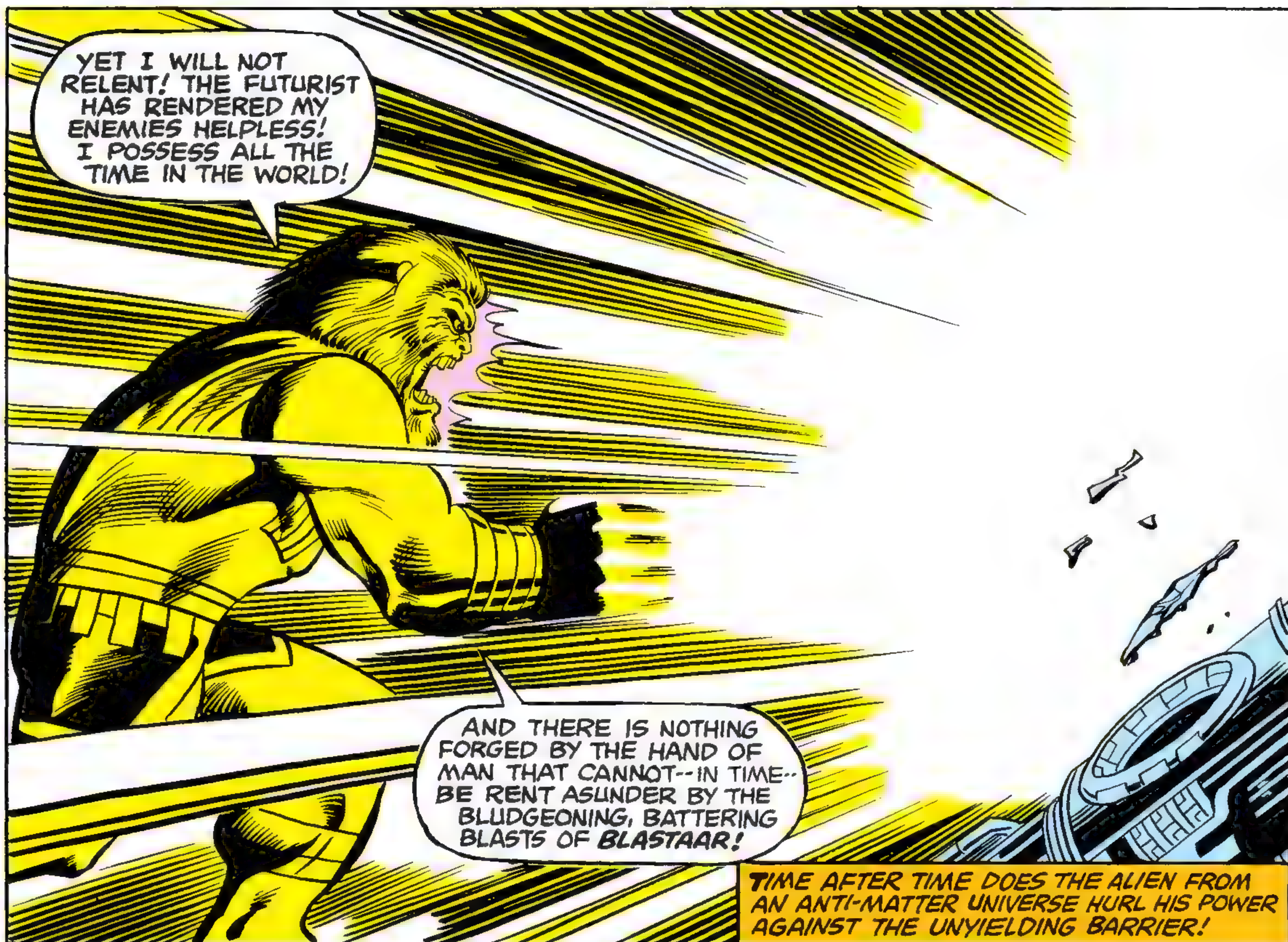
THAT FOOL, THE FUTURIST, THINKS I WISH TO PASS THROUGH THE PORTAL INTO THE NEGATIVE ZONE, AND THEN DESTROY THE PORTAL BEHIND ME!

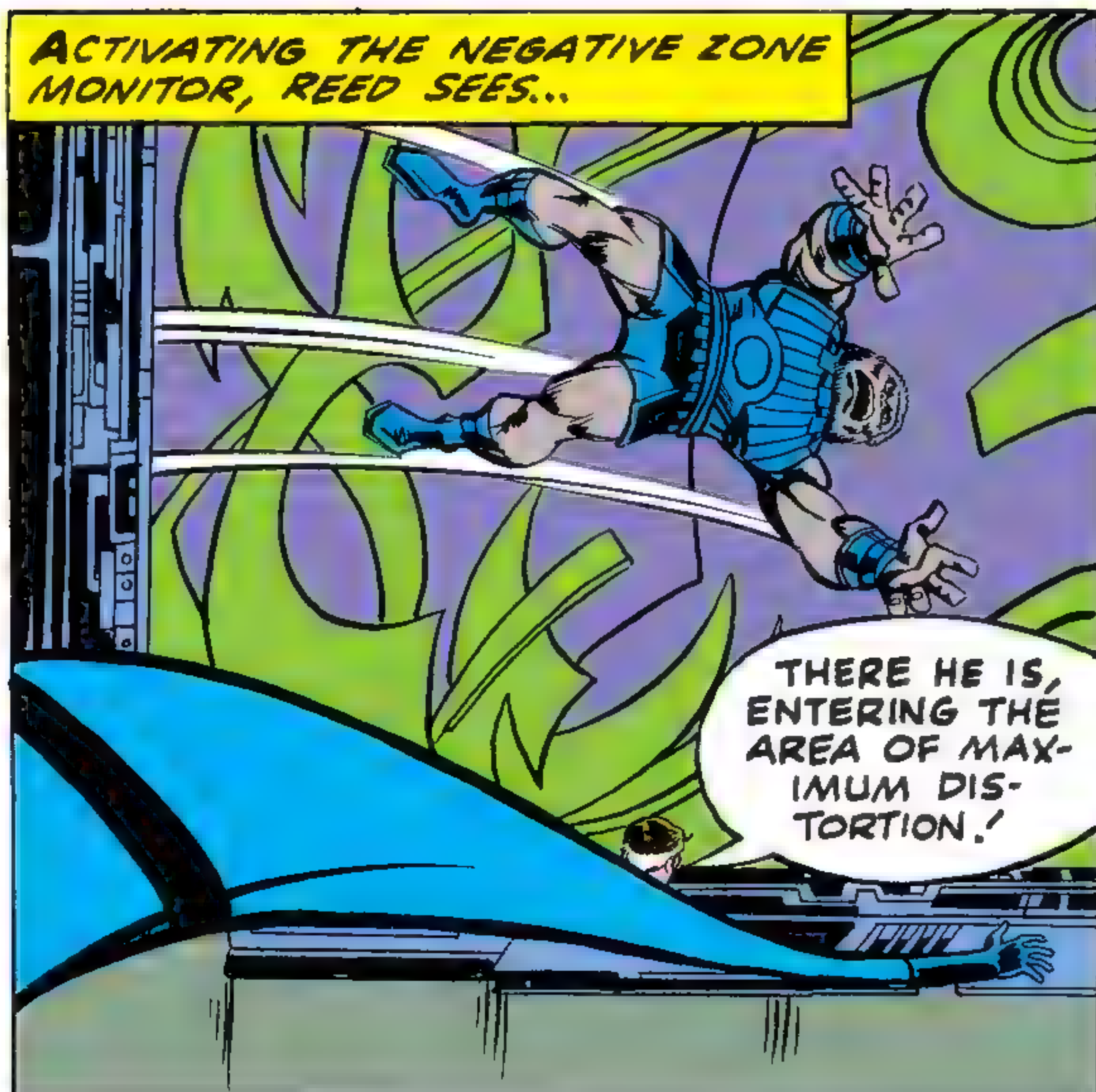
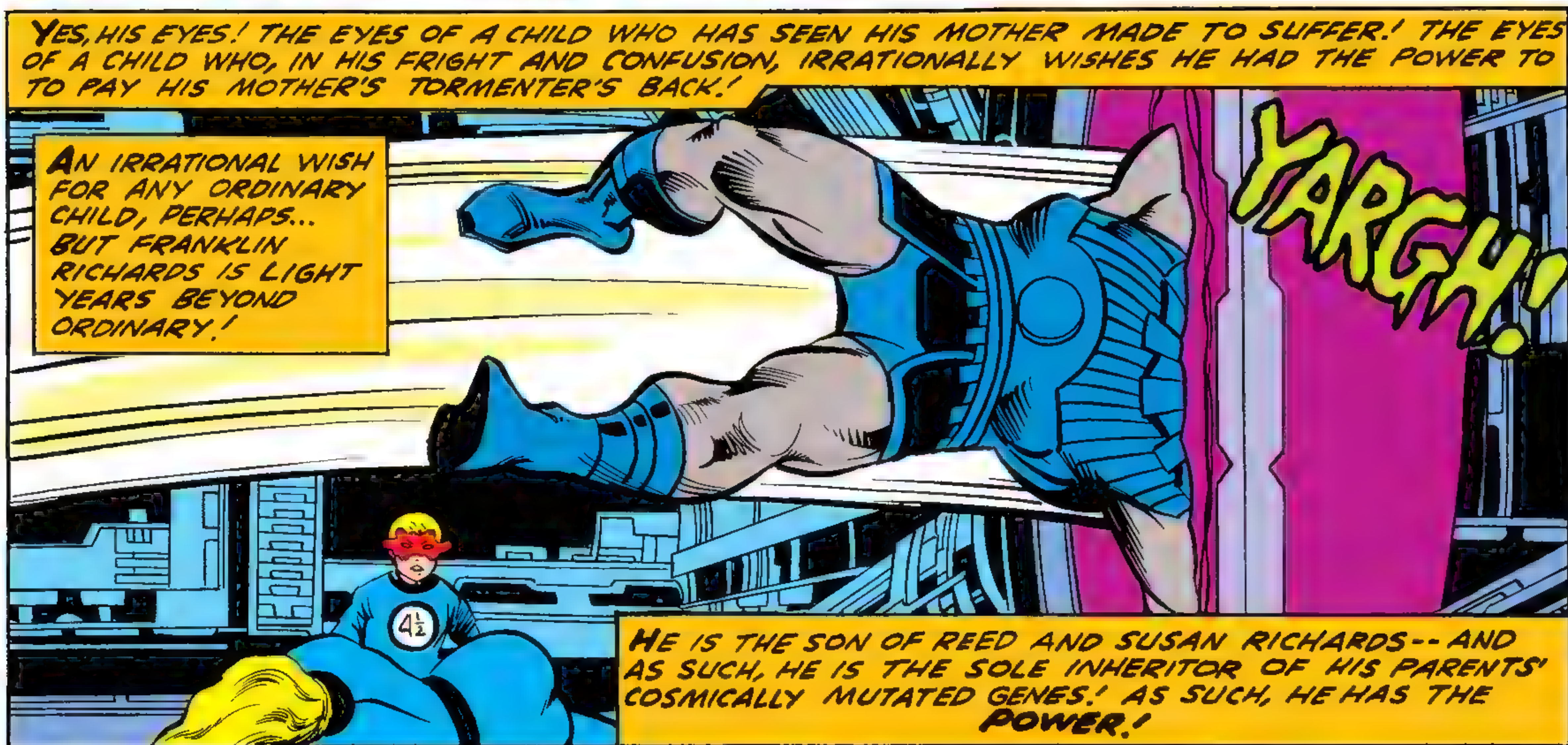
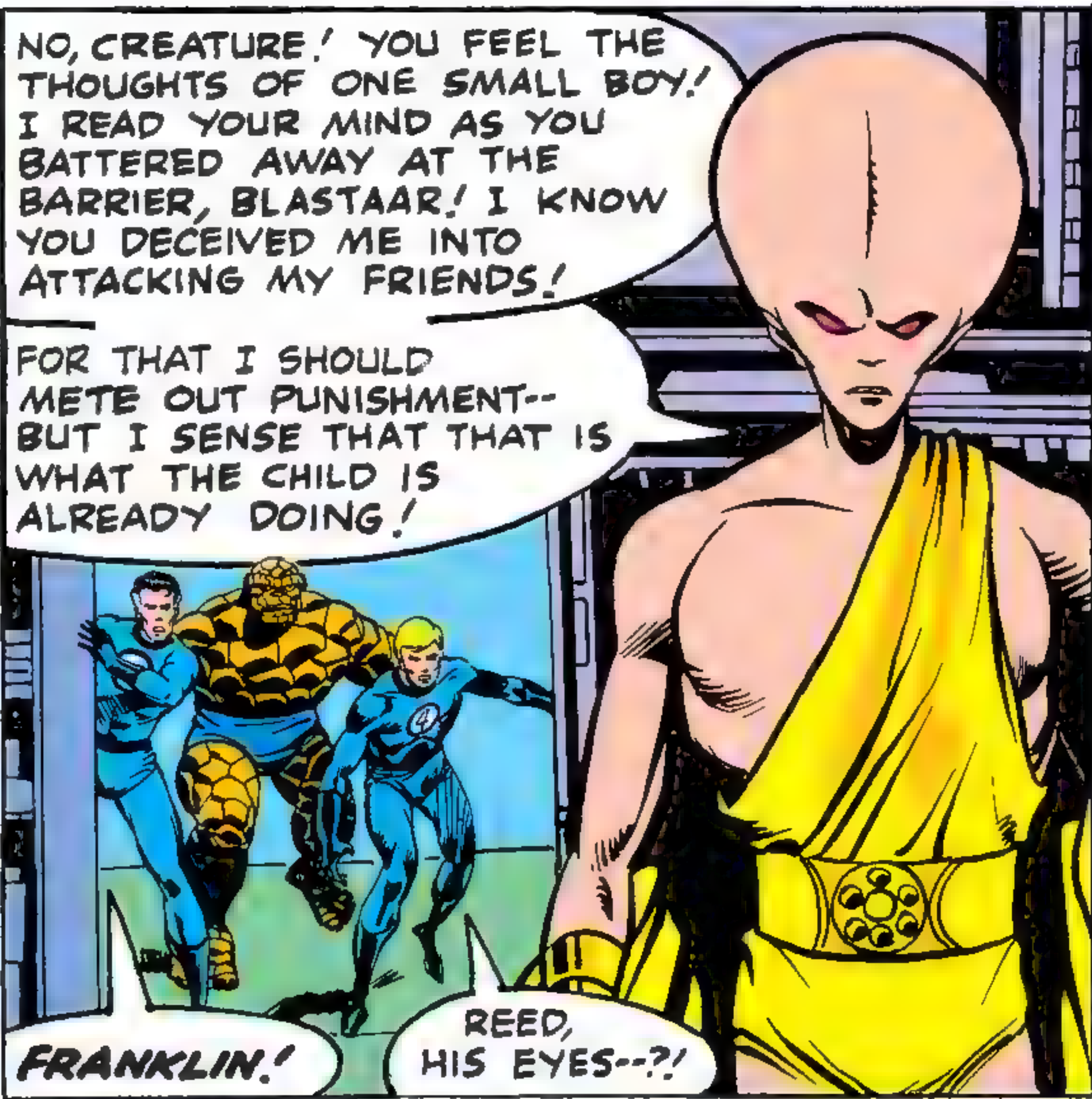
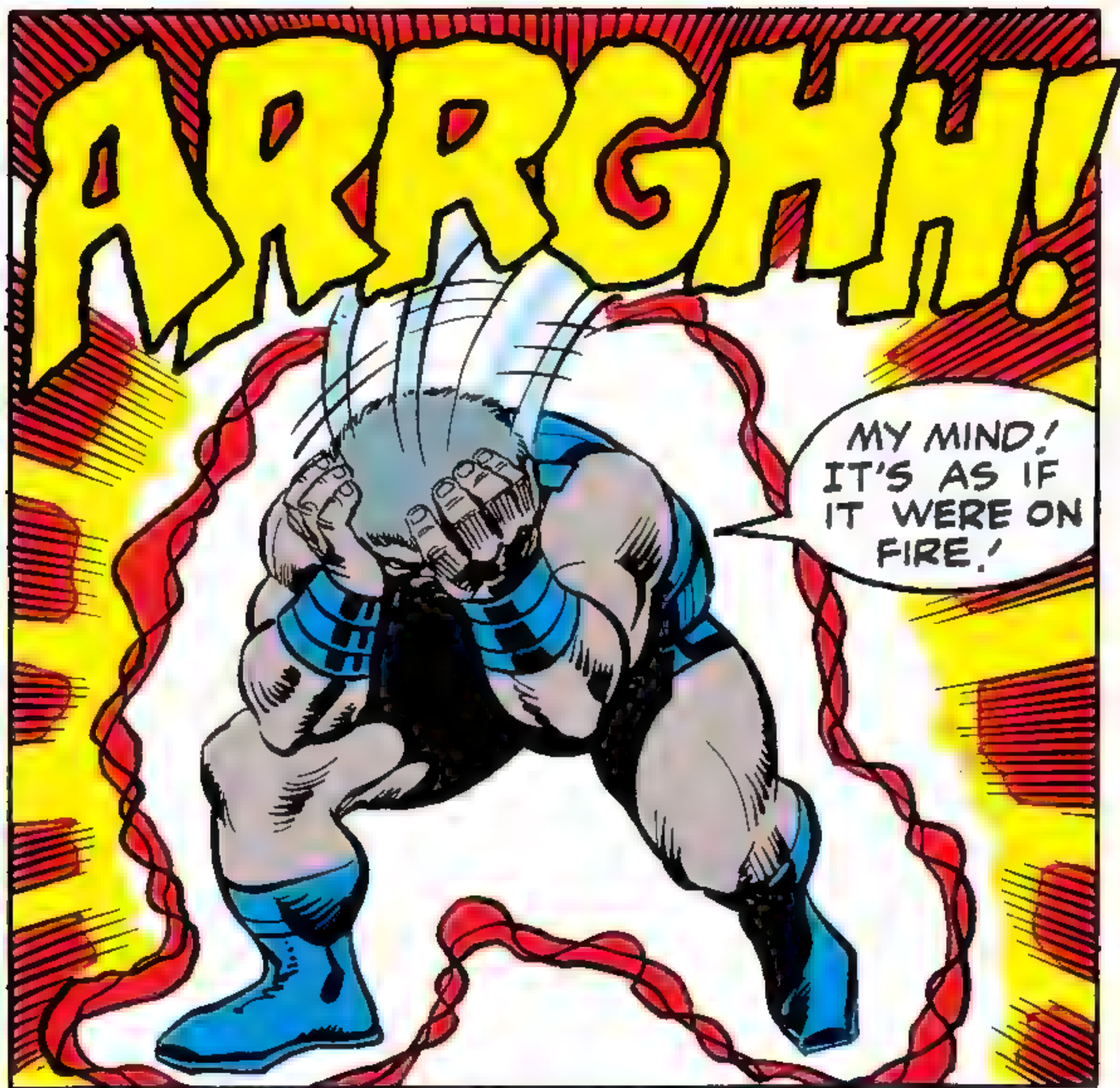
AS IF I FEARED SOME THREAT FROM EARTH!

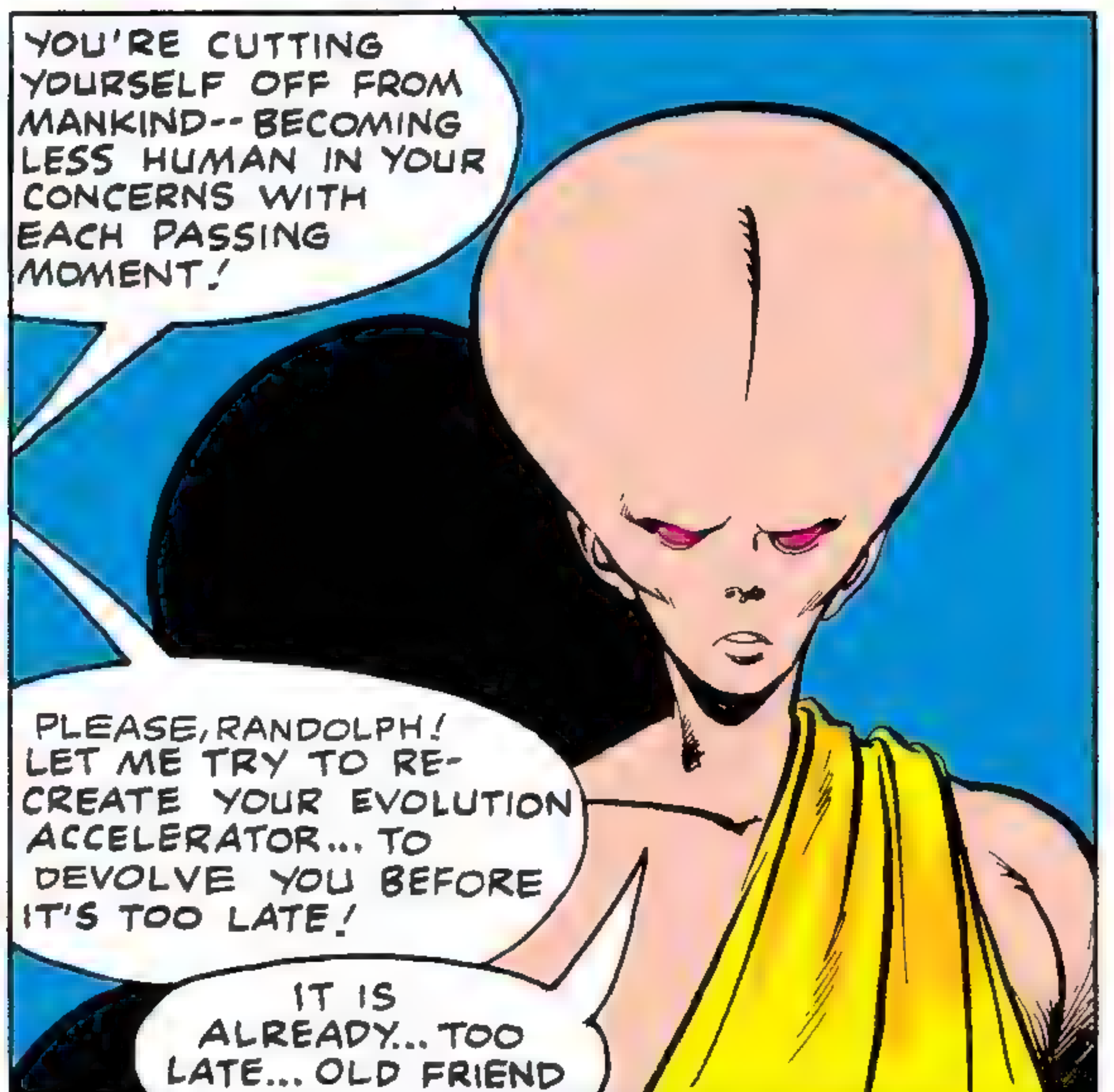
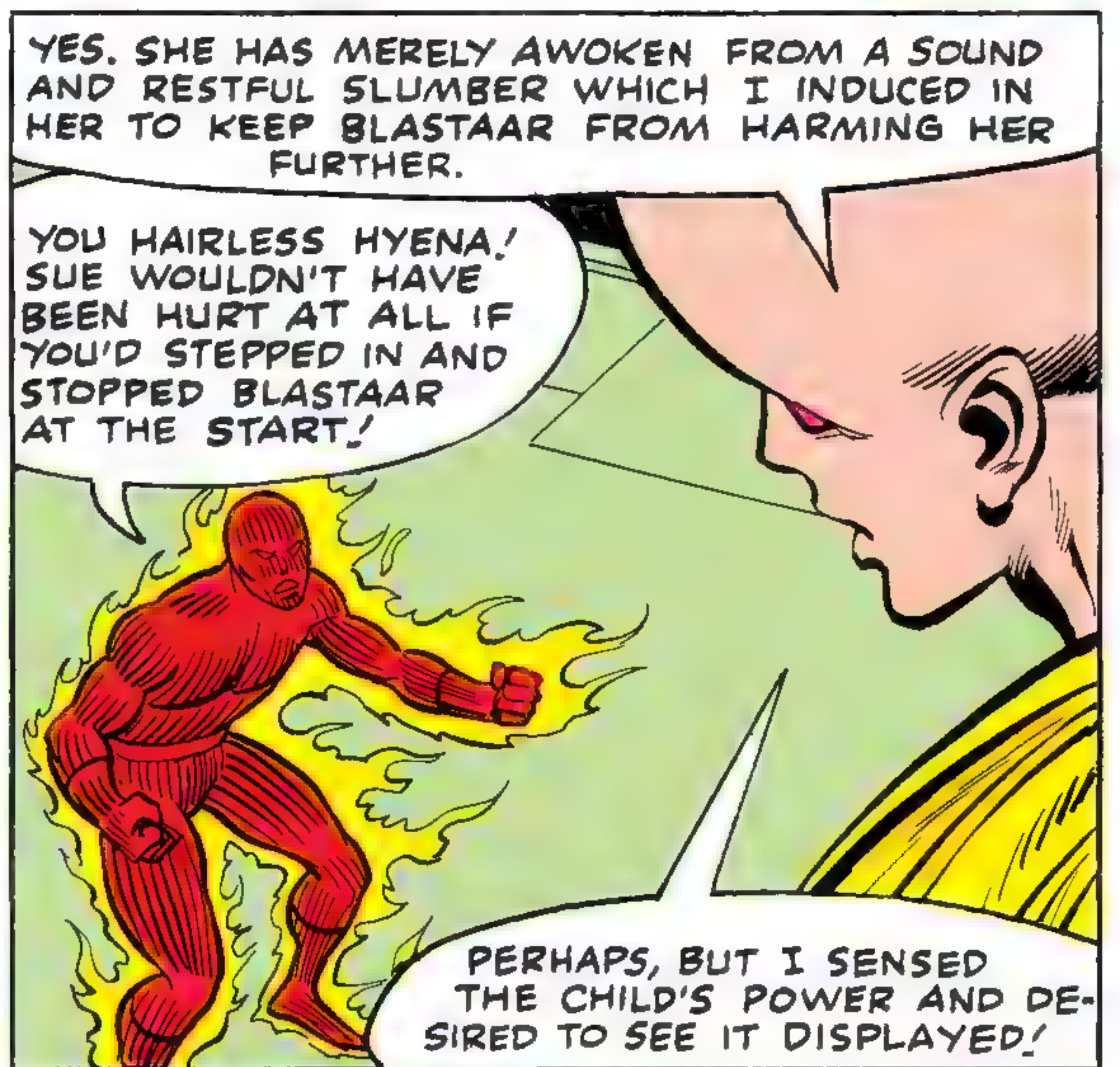
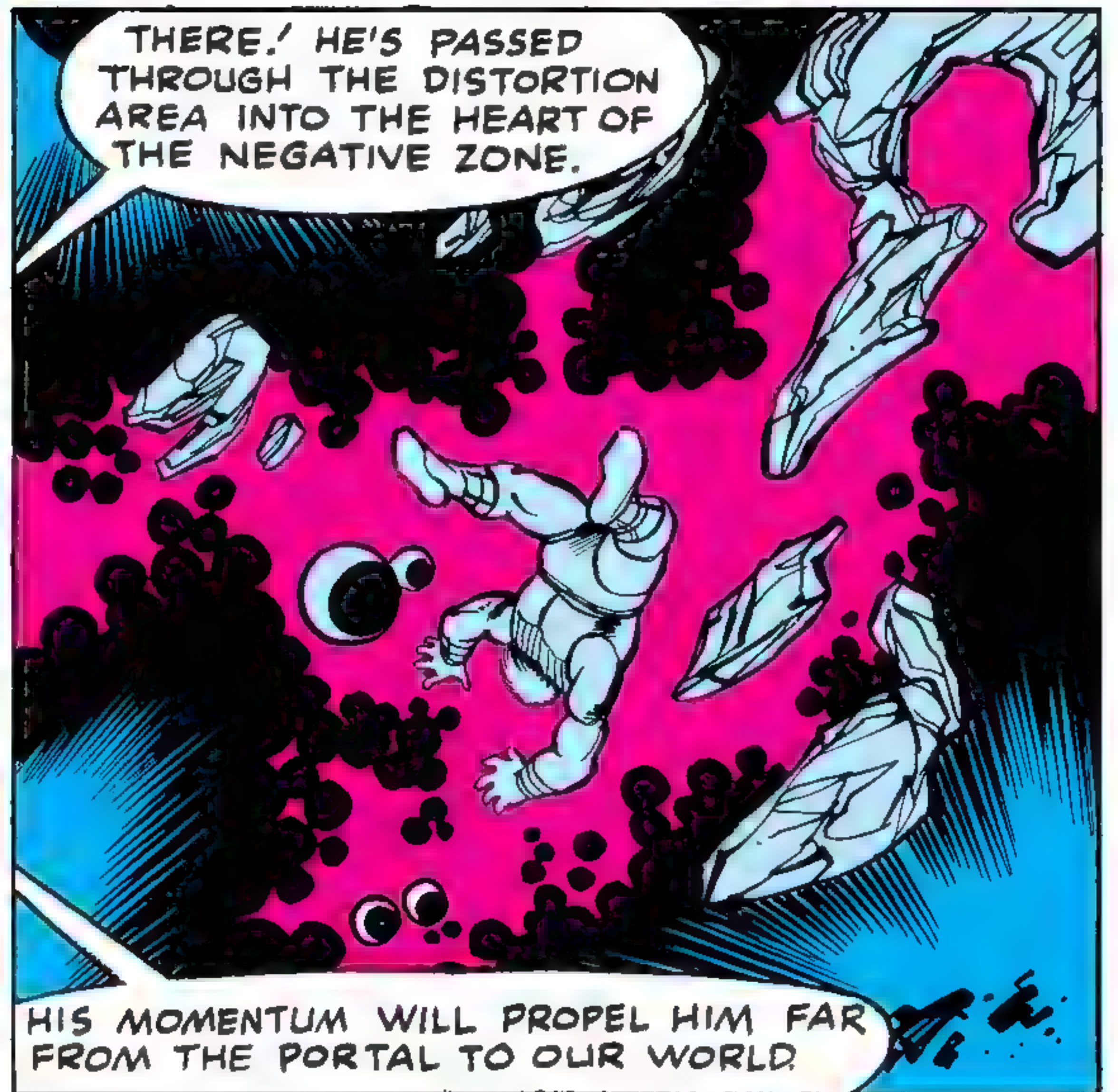


IN REALITY, I DESIRE THE PORTAL'S DESTRUCTION SO THAT I CAN PASS FROM THE NEGATIVE ZONE TO THIS SPHERE AT WILL-- TO STRIKE AND DESTROY WHENEVER I WISH!

BUT REED RICHARDS HAS BUILT WELL! NOT EVEN MY MIGHTIEST BOMBBURSTS CAN FORCE THE OUTER PORTAL DOORS!

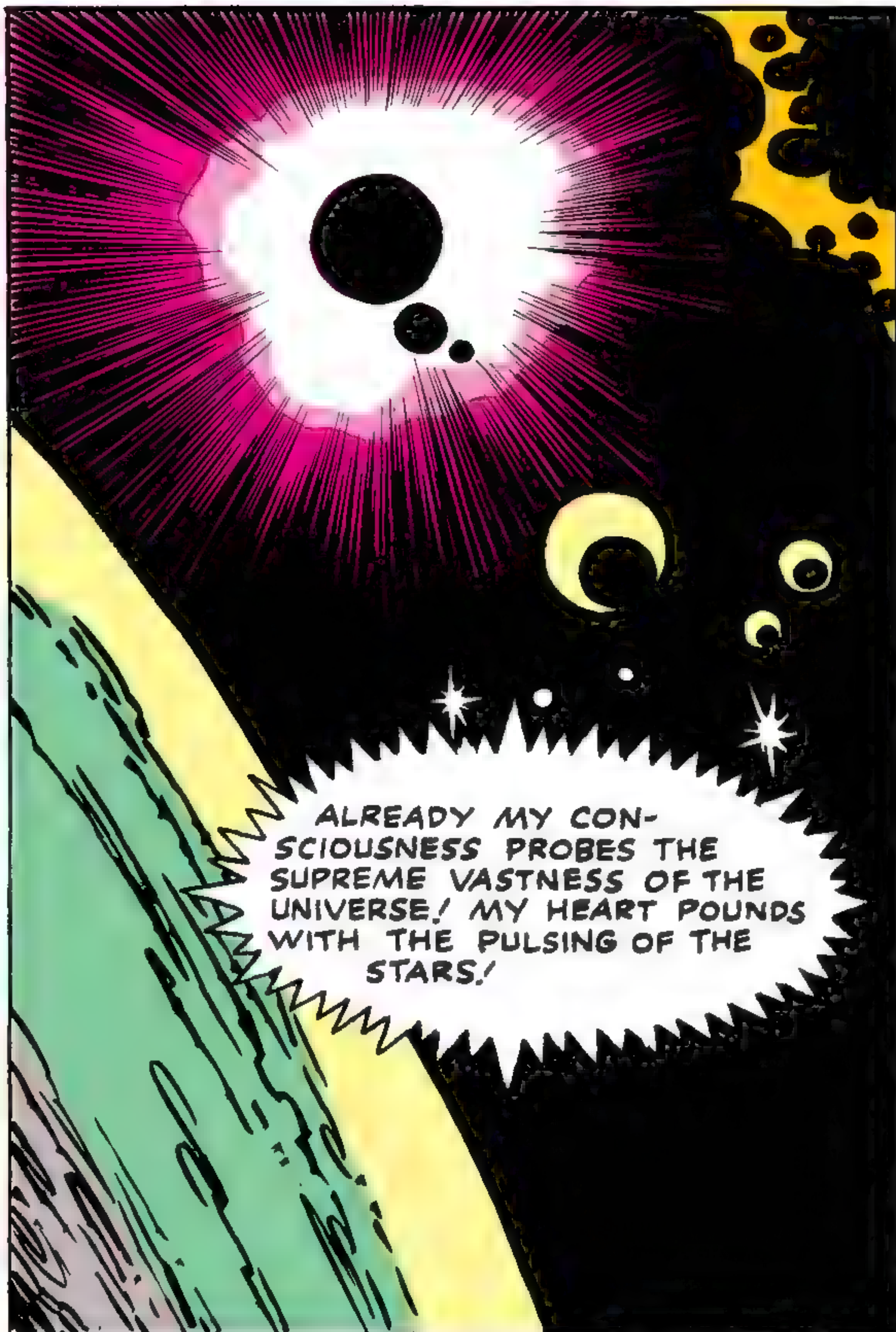




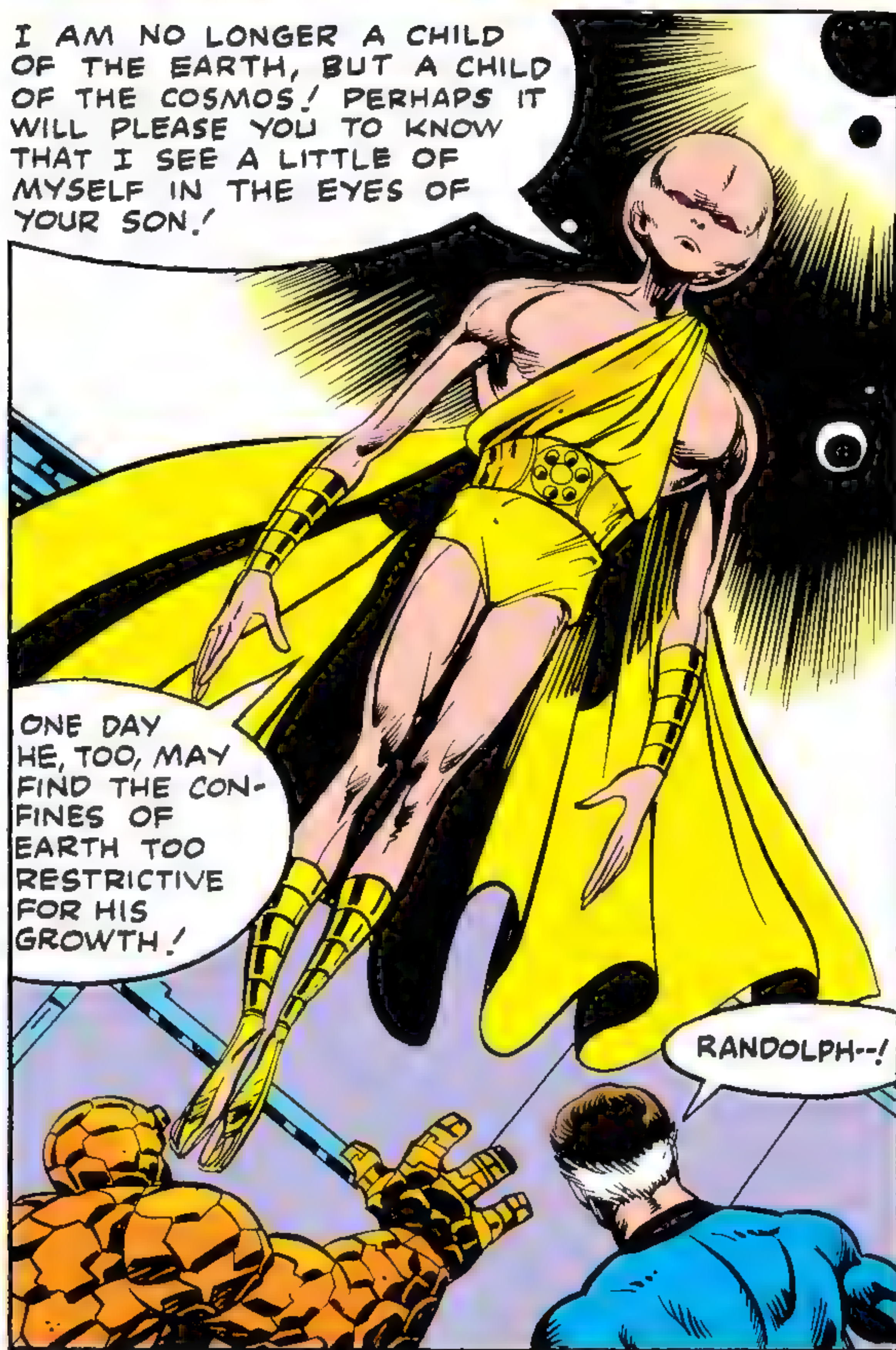




THINK, REED RICHARDS--
THINK OF WHAT IT MUST
BE LIKE TO REALIZE ONE'S
OWN DIVINITY... AND THEN
CONTEMPLATE A RETURN
TO MERE MORTALITY...



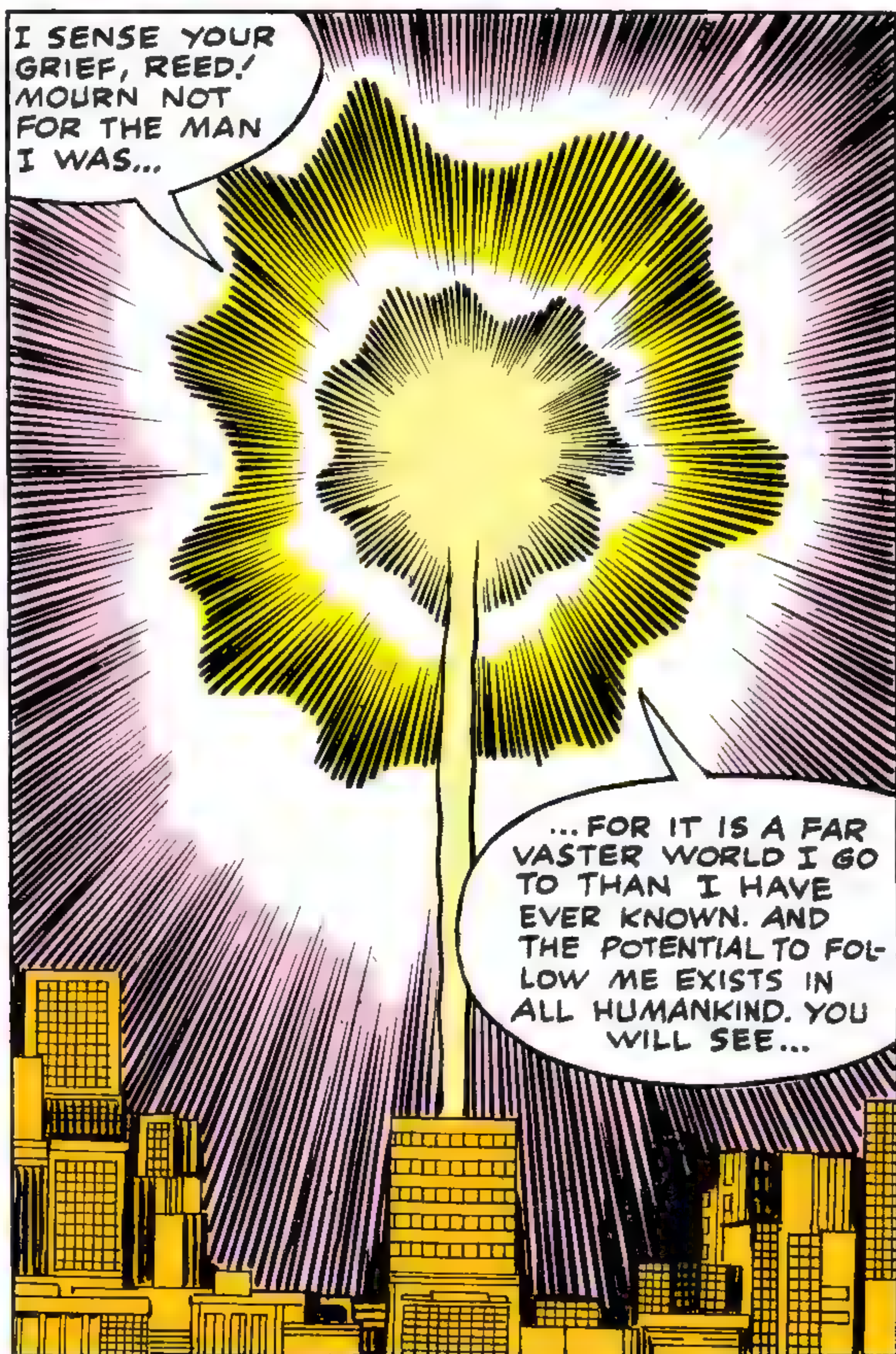
ALREADY MY CON-
SCIOUSNESS PROBES THE
SUPREME VASTNESS OF THE
UNIVERSE! MY HEART POUNDS
WITH THE PULSING OF THE
STARS!



I AM NO LONGER A CHILD
OF THE EARTH, BUT A CHILD
OF THE COSMOS! PERHAPS IT
WILL PLEASE YOU TO KNOW
THAT I SEE A LITTLE OF
MYSELF IN THE EYES OF
YOUR SON!

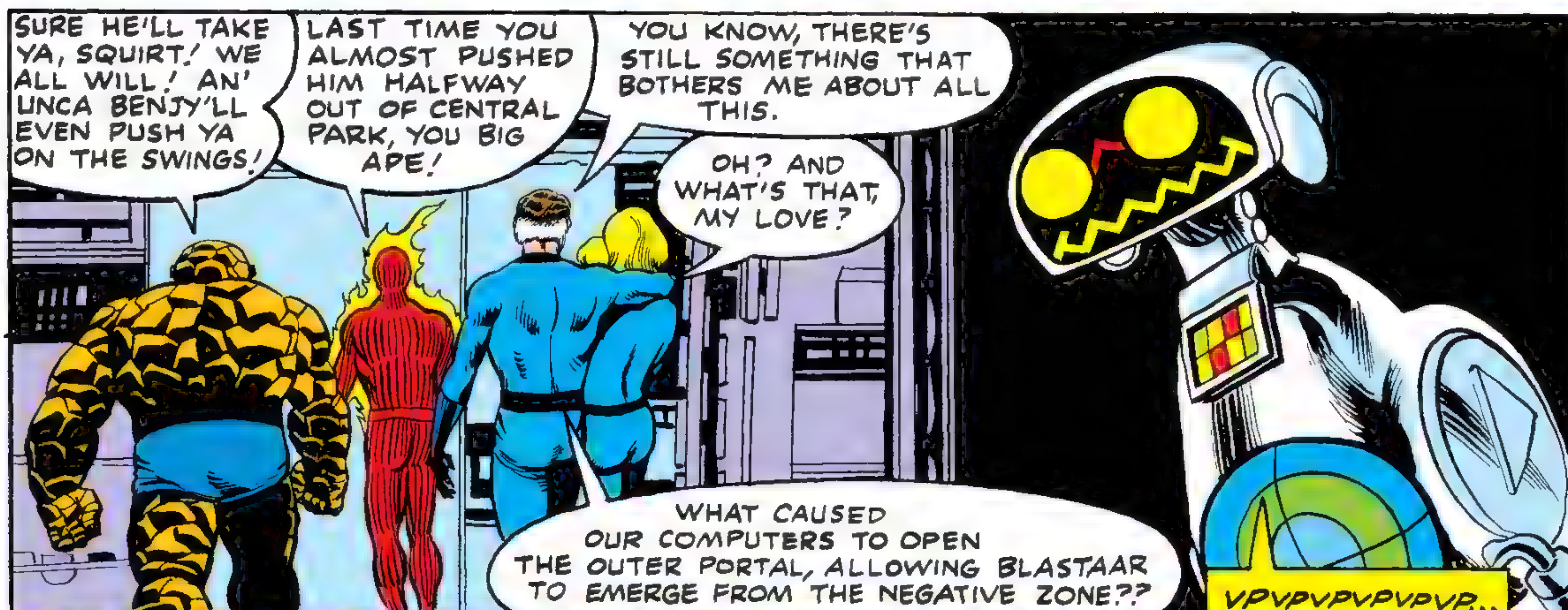
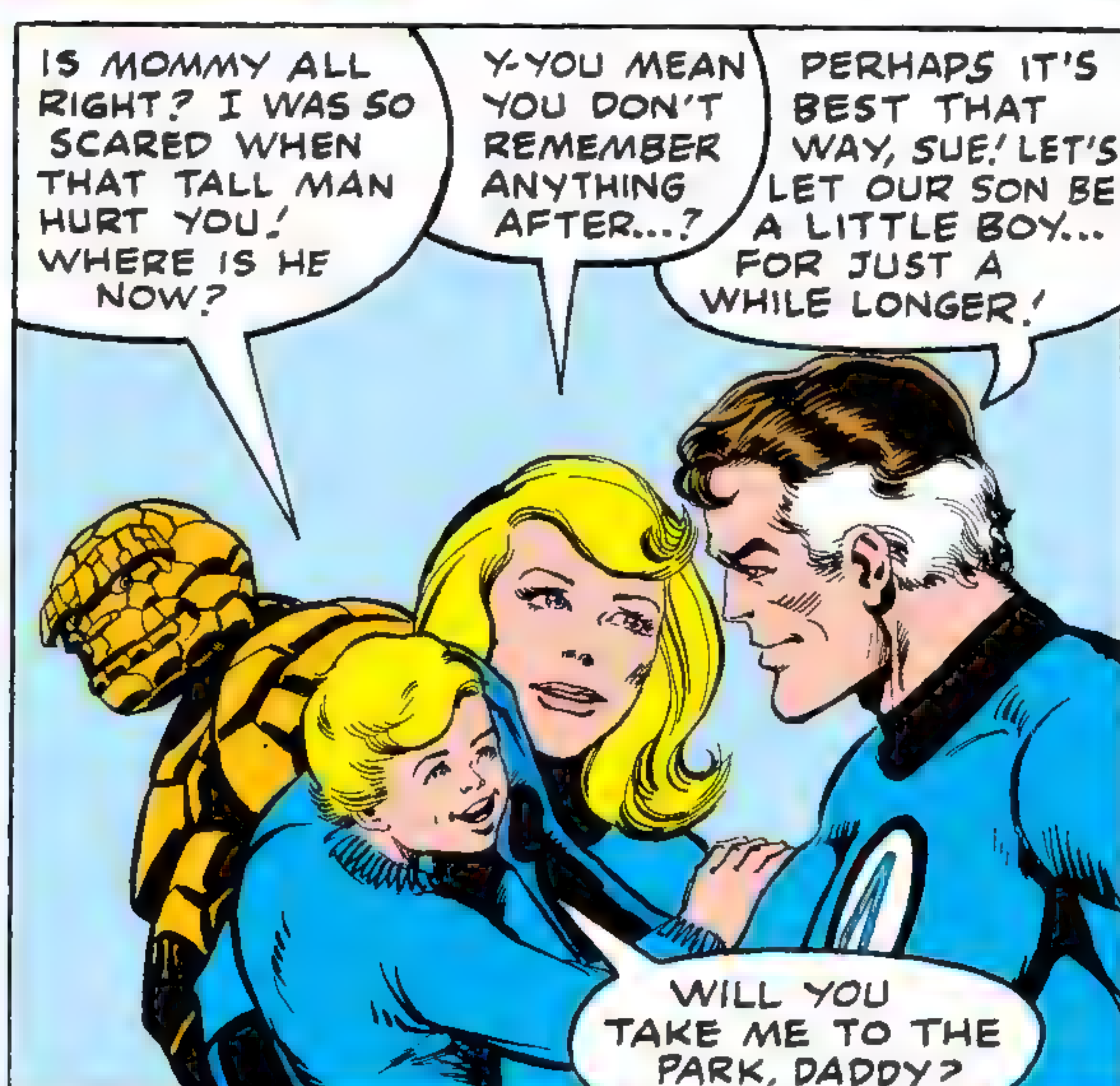
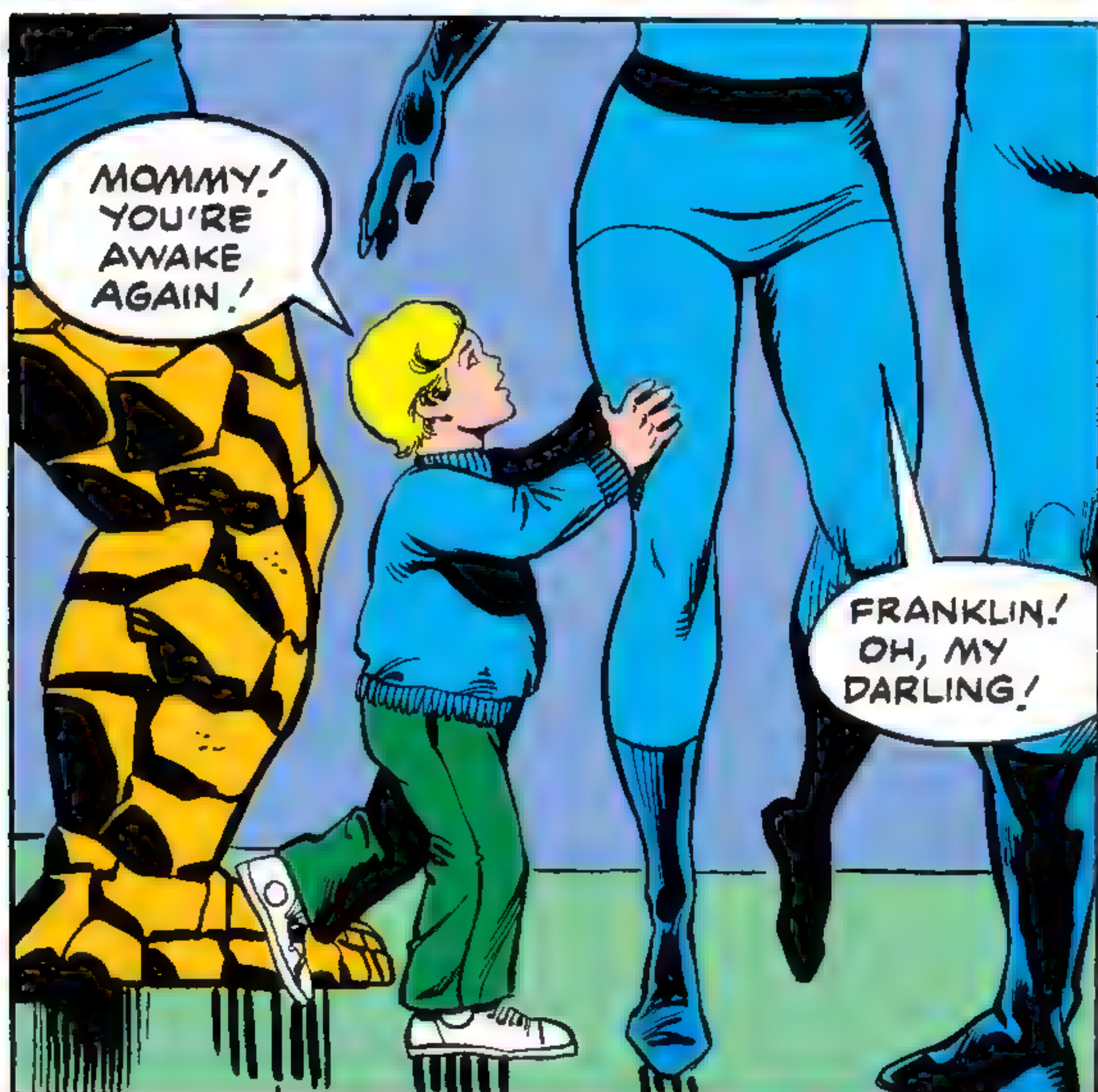
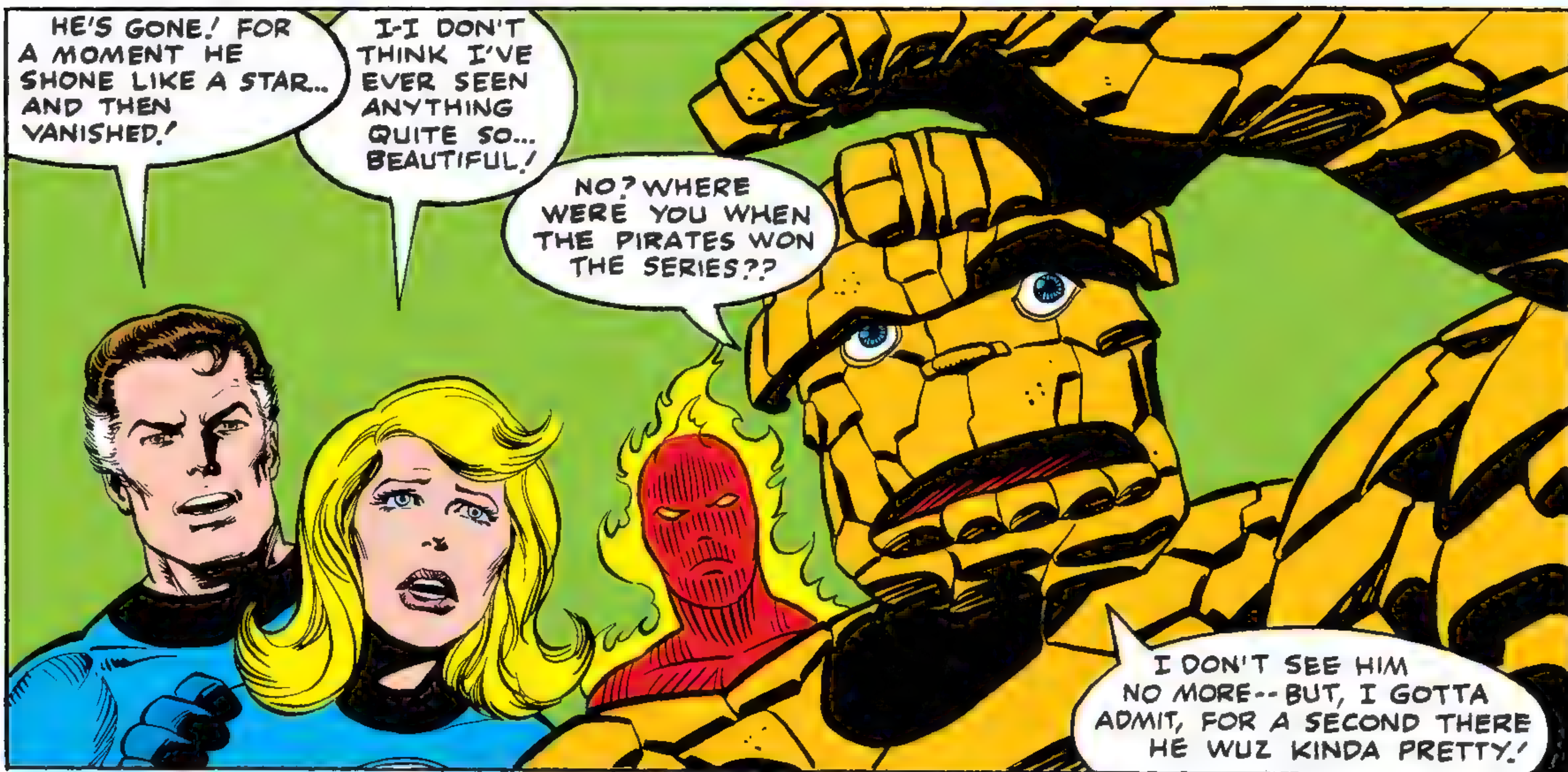
ONE DAY
HE, TOO, MAY
FIND THE CON-
FINES OF
EARTH TOO
RESTRICTIVE
FOR HIS
GROWTH!

RANDOLPH--!



I SENSE YOUR
GRIEF, REED!
MOURN NOT
FOR THE MAN
I WAS...

...FOR IT IS A FAR
VASTER WORLD I GO
TO THAN I HAVE
EVER KNOWN. AND
THE POTENTIAL TO FOL-
LOW ME EXISTS IN
ALL HUMANKIND. YOU
WILL SEE...



NEXT

MASQUERADE!

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

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FANTASTIC FOUR®

YA TIN-GALOOT--
WE BROUGHT YA
INTO THE FF--

--AND
NOW
I'M
GOING TO
DESTROY
YOU!

BY
HERBIE
BETRAYED!



Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!®

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MASQUERADE!

BASED ON A PLOT
SUGGESTION BY
MARV WOLFMAN

REED RICHARDS, HOW CAN YOU
BE SO INSENSITIVE, PACKING OUR
SON OFF TO WHISPER HILL AFTER
HIS TRAUMATIZING ENCOUNTER
WITH BLASTARR?! FRANKLIN
NEEDS TO BE WITH HIS PARENTS
NOW!

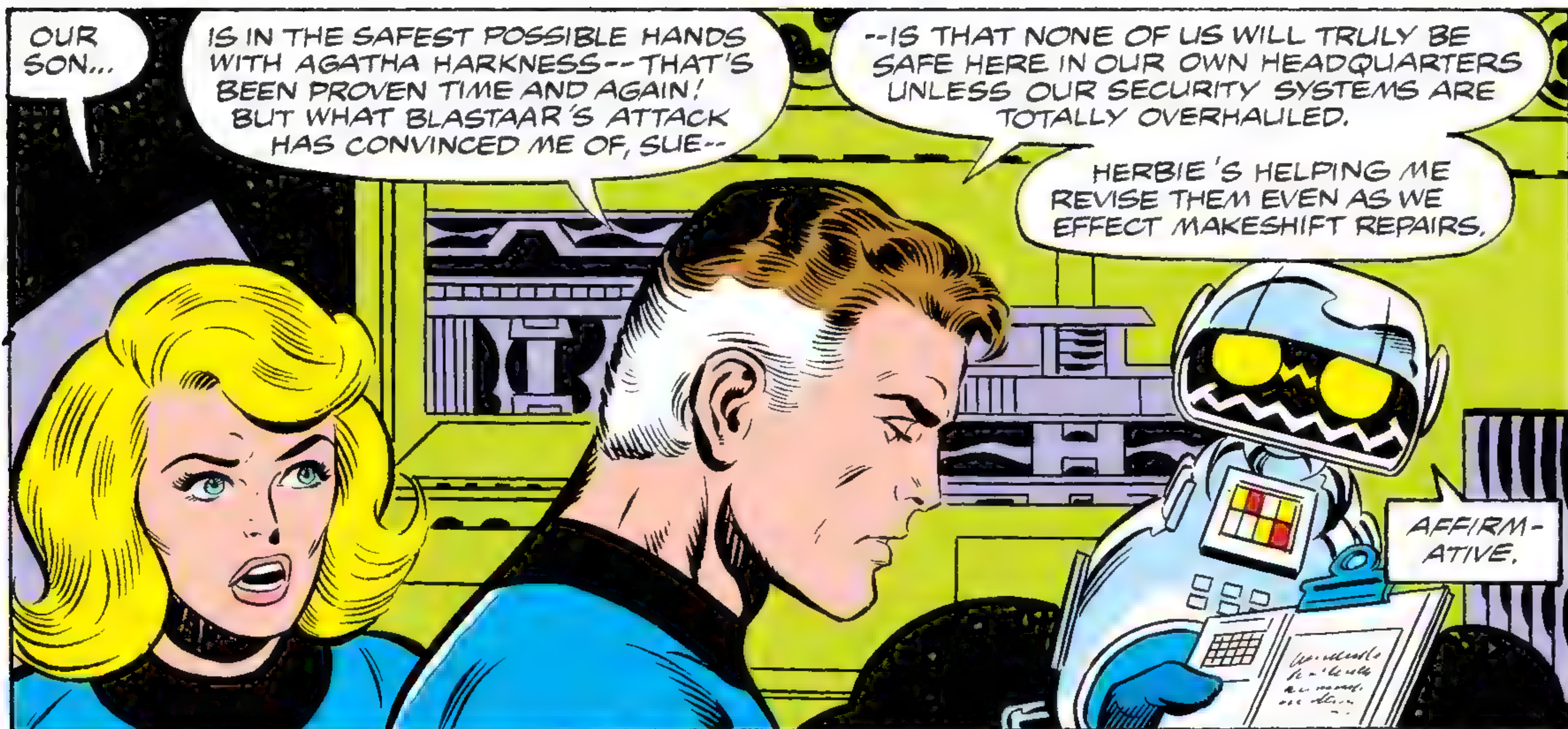
I JUST CALLED
AGATHA HARKNESS.
SHE SAYS MY NEPHEW'S
SLEEPING LIKE A
LAMB!

WHICH IS
WHAT I WISH I
WUZ DOIN',
INSTEADA GIVIN'
MYSELF ORANGE
HERNIAS!

DAMAGE TO
BAXTER BUILDING
EXTENSIVE, SIR.
COMPUTING REPAIR
SCHEMATIC.

THANK YOU, HERBIE,
BUT I'M WORKING ON SOME
REPAIR MODIFICATIONS
OF MY OWN.

REED?
Y-YOU'RE
NOT EVEN
LISTENING
TO ME!!



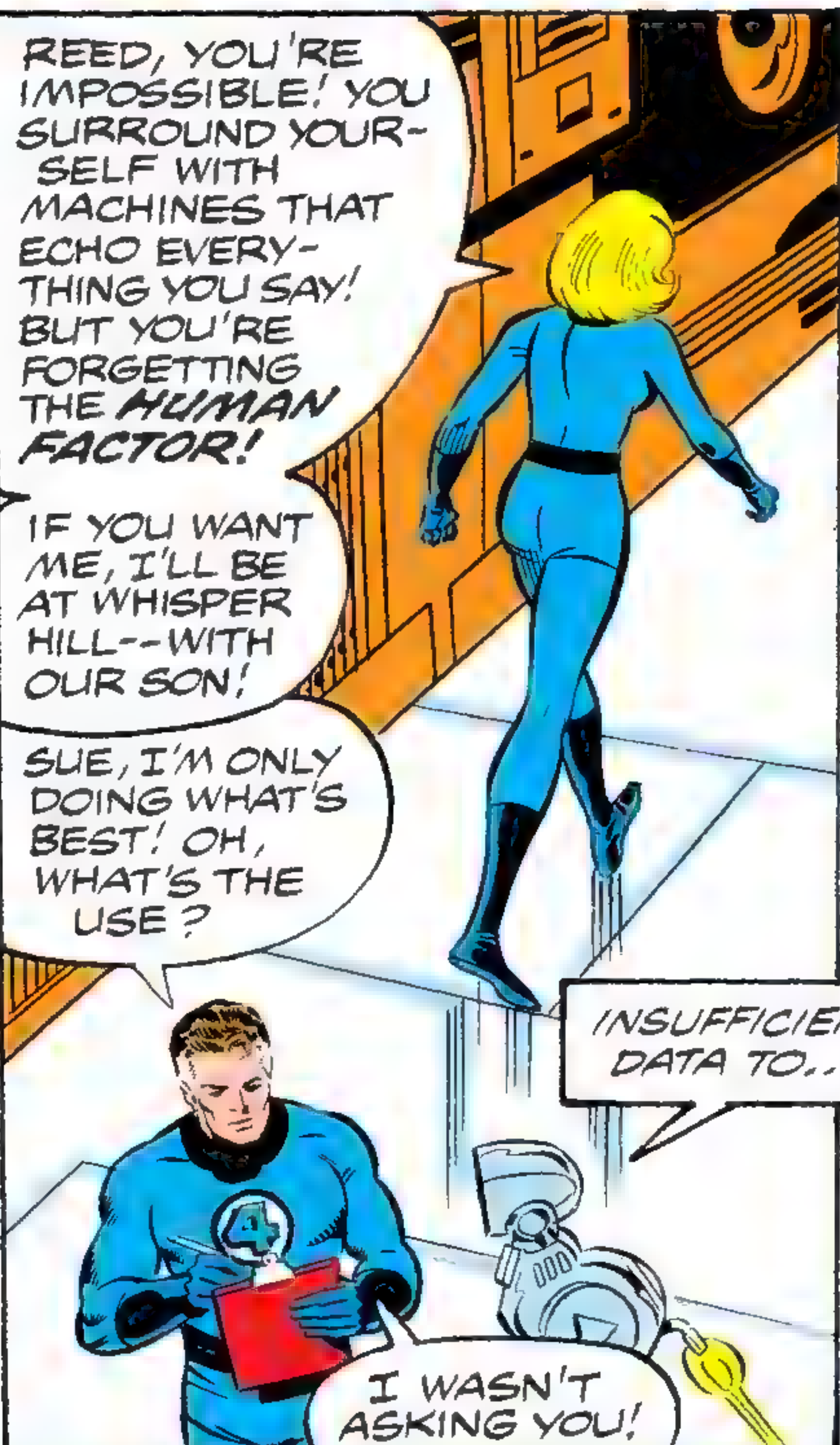
OUR SON...

IS IN THE SAFEST POSSIBLE HANDS WITH AGATHA HARKNESS--THAT'S BEEN PROVEN TIME AND AGAIN! BUT WHAT BLASTAAR'S ATTACK HAS CONVINCED ME OF, SUE--

--IS THAT NONE OF US WILL TRULY BE SAFE HERE IN OUR OWN HEADQUARTERS UNLESS OUR SECURITY SYSTEMS ARE TOTALLY OVERHAULED.

HERBIE'S HELPING ME REVISE THEM EVEN AS WE EFFECT MAKESHIFT REPAIRS.

AFFIRM-
ATIVE.



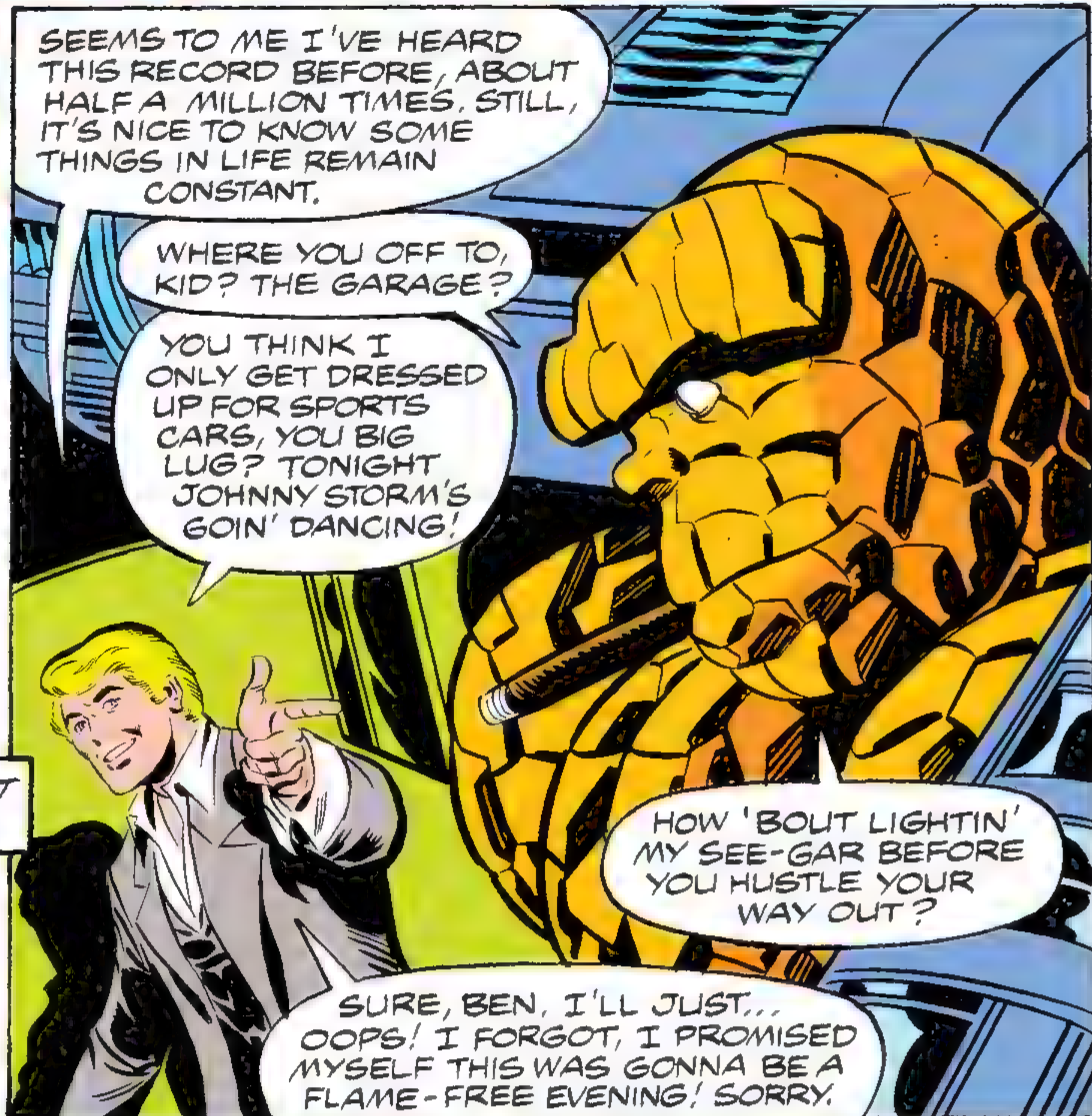
REED, YOU'RE IMPOSSIBLE! YOU SURROUND YOURSELF WITH MACHINES THAT ECHO EVERYTHING YOU SAY! BUT YOU'RE FORGETTING THE **HUMAN FACTOR!**

IF YOU WANT ME, I'LL BE AT WHISPER HILL--WITH OUR SON!

SUE, I'M ONLY DOING WHAT'S BEST! OH, WHAT'S THE USE?

INSUFFICIENT DATA TO...

I WASN'T ASKING YOU!



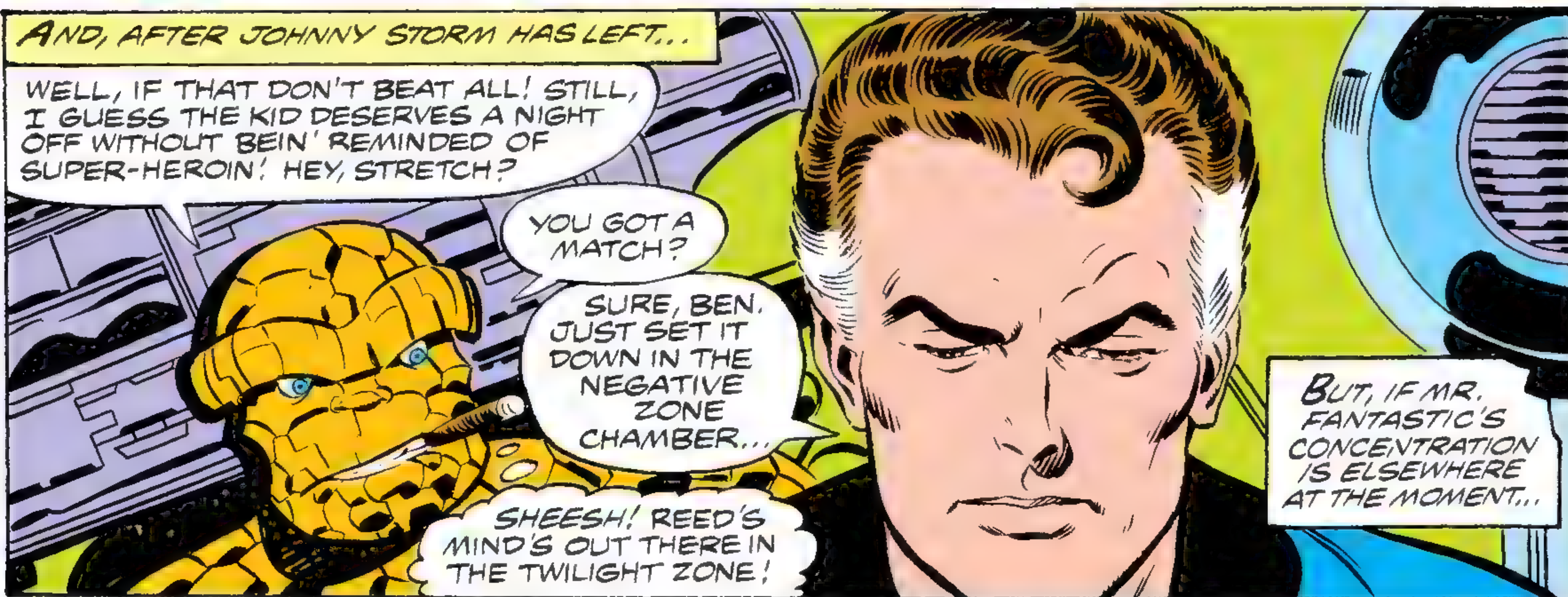
SEEMS TO ME I'VE HEARD THIS RECORD BEFORE, ABOUT HALF A MILLION TIMES. STILL, IT'S NICE TO KNOW SOME THINGS IN LIFE REMAIN CONSTANT.

WHERE YOU OFF TO, KID? THE GARAGE?

YOU THINK I ONLY GET DRESSED UP FOR SPORTS CARS, YOU BIG LUG? TONIGHT JOHNNY STORM'S GOIN' DANCING!

HOW 'BOUT LIGHTIN' MY SEE-GAR BEFORE YOU HUSTLE YOUR WAY OUT?

SURE, BEN, I'LL JUST... OOPS! I FORGOT, I PROMISED MYSELF THIS WAS GONNA BE A FLAME-FREE EVENING! SORRY.



AND, AFTER JOHNNY STORM HAS LEFT...

WELL, IF THAT DON'T BEAT ALL! STILL, I GUESS THE KID DESERVES A NIGHT OFF WITHOUT BEIN' REMINDED OF SUPER-HEROIN'. HEY, STRETCH?

YOU GOT A MATCH?

SURE, BEN. JUST SET IT DOWN IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE CHAMBER...

SHEESH! REED'S MIND'S OUT THERE IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE!

BUT, IF MR. FANTASTIC'S CONCENTRATION IS ELSEWHERE AT THE MOMENT...

...HIS REASONS ARE WEIGHTY ENOUGH THAT EVEN THE GARRULOUS BEN GRIMM CARRIES OUT HIS FRIENDS INSTRUCTION WITHOUT HIS CUSTOMARY COMPLAINING.

ALL RIGHT, HERBIE!
BEN AND I WILL
INSTALL THE NEW
TIME-LOCK ON THE
NEGATIVE ZONE
PORTAL!

THAT SHOULD SECURE ONE
AREA, BUT I WANT YOU TO
CONDUCT A COMPLETE SYSTEMS
CHECK BY TYING IN TO THE
MAIN COMPUTER!

SYSTEMS
CHECK WILL
COMMENCE
IMMEDIATELY.

PUTTERING TO ITSELF, REED RICHARDS' CREATION HERBIE-- AN ACRONYM STANDING FOR HUMANOID EXPERIMENTAL ROBOT B-TYPE INTEGRATED ELECTRONICS-- SAILS DOWN SILENT CORRIDORS...

VPVPVPVPVP.

HERBIE, FOR ALL THE CHARM HIS DESIGN HELD FOR THE PRODUCERS OF A SATURDAY MORNING CARTOON SHOW, IS A MACHINE.

A FUNCTIONING ANALOG
COMPUTER, ITS MEMORY
BANKS A STOREHOUSE
OF INFORMATION FED IN
FROM THE PHENOMENAL
LIVING COMPUTERS
OF FAR-OFF XANDAR.

NOW, VOICE-
PROGRAMMED
BY ITS CREATOR,
REED RICHARDS,
HERBIE ENTERS
THE MAIN COM-
PUTER COMPLEX
OF THE HEAD-
QUARTERS OF
THE FANTASTIC
FOUR.

AND, OBEYING ITS PROGRAMMING, IT PLUGS ITSELF IN.

WITHIN SECONDS, EVERYTHING THERE IS TO
KNOW ABOUT THE FANTASTIC FOUR IS
KNOWN TO THEIR ROBOT SERVANT!

IT IS ONLY THEN THAT THE LITTLE LIFELESS
CONSTRUCT DISENGAGES ITS PROBER-
ARMS...

... AND FILLS THE CHAMBER
WITH A HOLLOW AND
HORRIBLE LAUGHTER!

VEEPEEVEEPEE
VEEEEE!

MEANWHILE, HAVING ESCHEWED HIS FAR-FASTER FLIGHT-VIA-FLAME FOR THE MORE TEDIOUS TRANSPORTATION OF NEW YORK CITY'S SUBWAYS, JOHNNY STORM EVENTUALLY FINDS HIMSELF AT THE STUPEFYING STUDIOOO* DISCOTHEQUE...

ALL RIIGHT! GREAT LIGHTS! GREAT MUSIC! AND LOOK AT THAT LOVELY LADY!

LOOK, I ALREADY TOLD YOU, I DON'T DANCE WITH DRUNKS!

AW, C'MON BABY! WHATSAMATTER, MY COMPANY AIN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR YA?

*SYMBOL FOR INFINITY-- M.

This panel shows Johnny Storm, a man with blonde hair in a grey suit, looking at a woman in a blue dress who is being harassed by a man in a purple suit. In the background, there are colorful balloons and a disco ball.

I THINK THAT MIGHT BE SOMEWHAT OF AN UNDERSTATEMENT, FRIEND!

HEY, THANKS, BUT I CAN HANDLE...

WHO YOU, PUNK? HER BOYFRIEND?

ME? NO, I'M JUST APPRECIATIVE OF THE LADY'S RIGHT TO PRIVACY!

Johnny Storm is talking to a woman with blonde hair and a blue mask. She is looking at him with a concerned expression.

WELL, IF YOU AIN'T HER BOYFRIEND, THEN WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU GOT A RIGHT TO BUTT IN?!

Johnny Storm is confronting a man in a purple suit who is trying to touch the woman's shoulder. Johnny is looking angry.

WELL, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THERE'S...THIS!

WHUMP!

UNNEFF!

Johnny Storm is shown in a dynamic pose, using his flame power to create a large, glowing sphere. The man in the purple suit is being thrown back by the force of the blast.

AND THIS!

OMIGOSH, YOU-- YOU'RE THE HUMAN TORCH!

YEP.

HEY, I'M SORRY! I WAS JUST LEAVIN'!

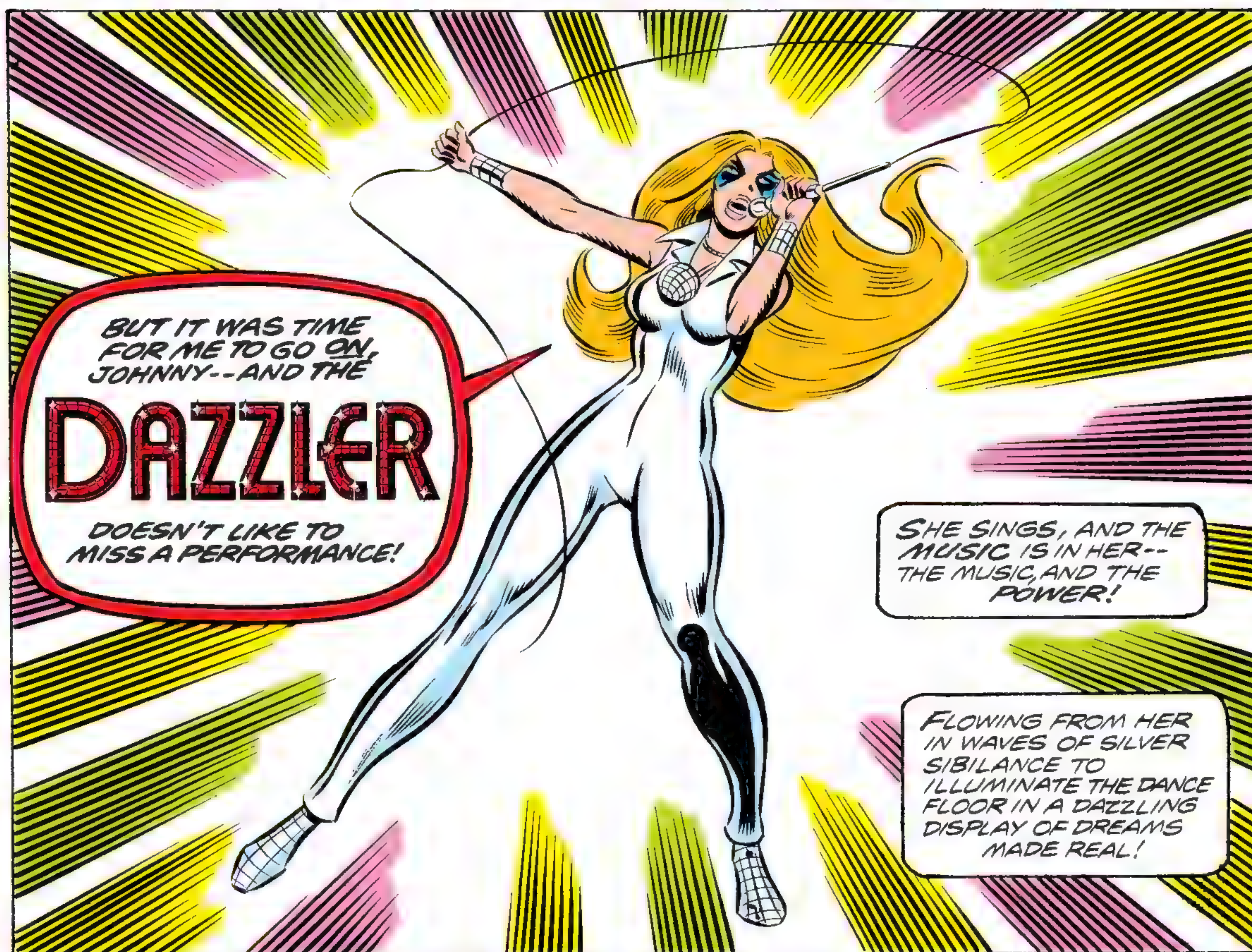
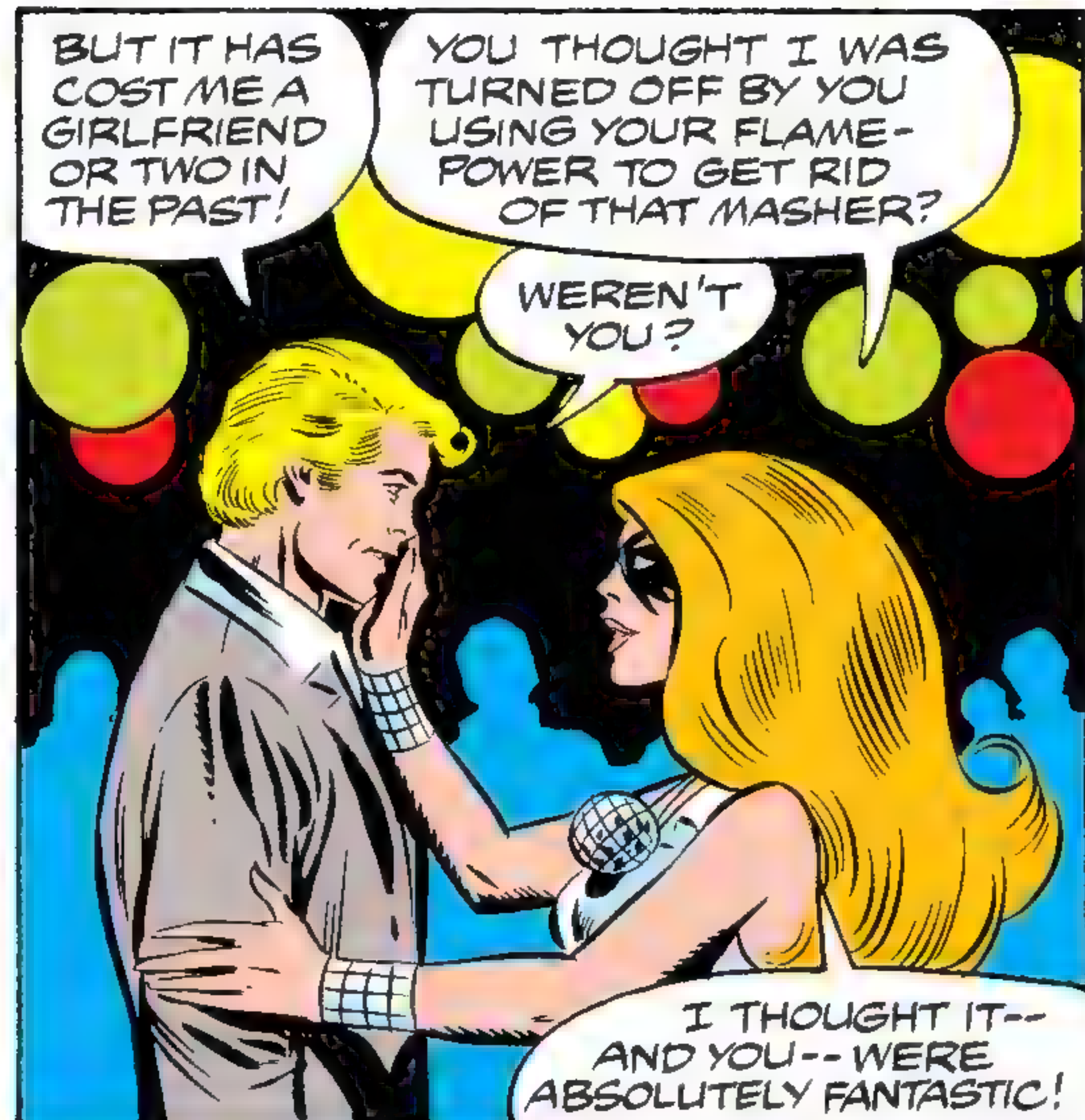
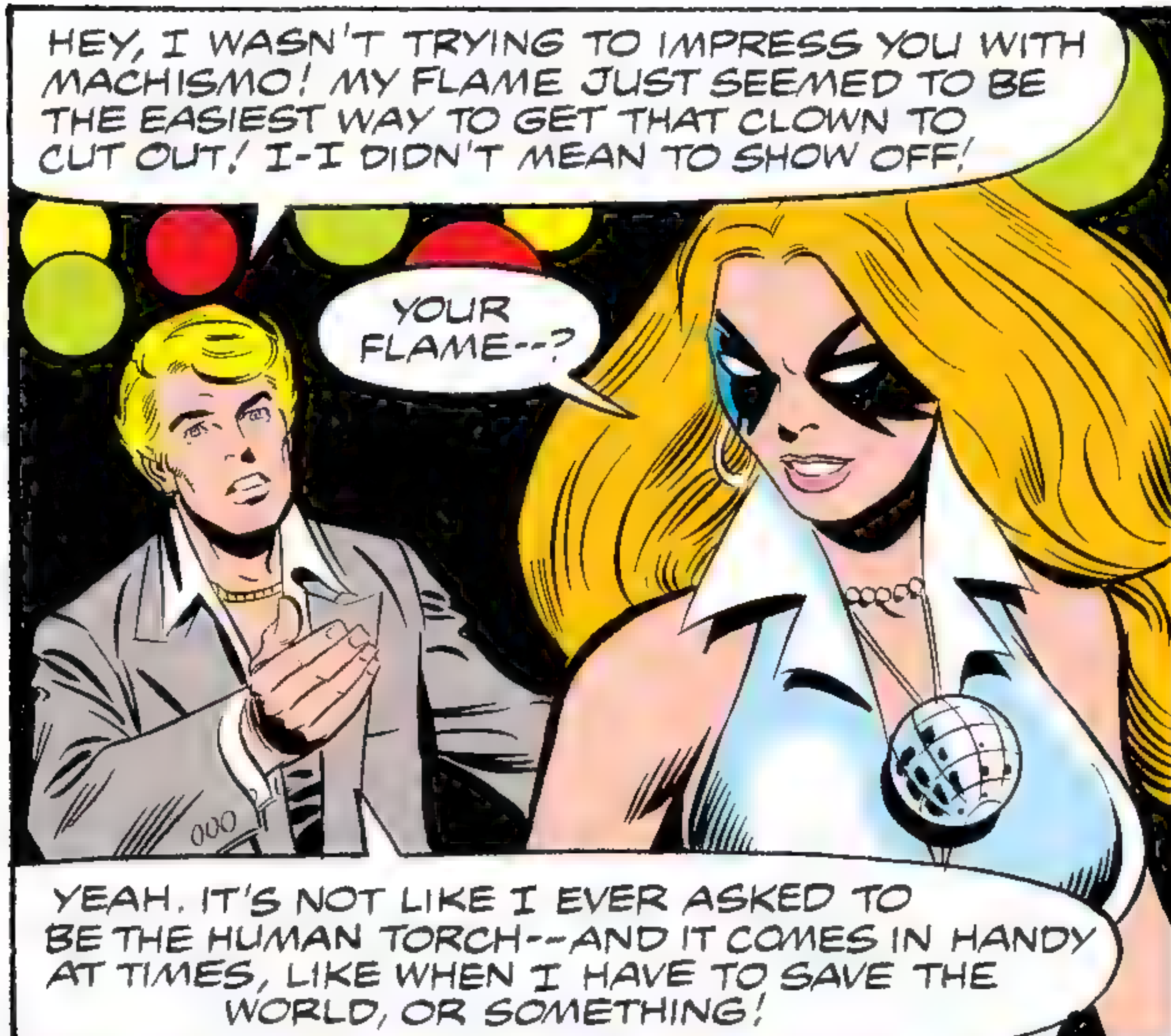
Johnny Storm is using his flame power to create a large, glowing sphere. The man in the purple suit is looking shocked and is being thrown back by the force of the blast.

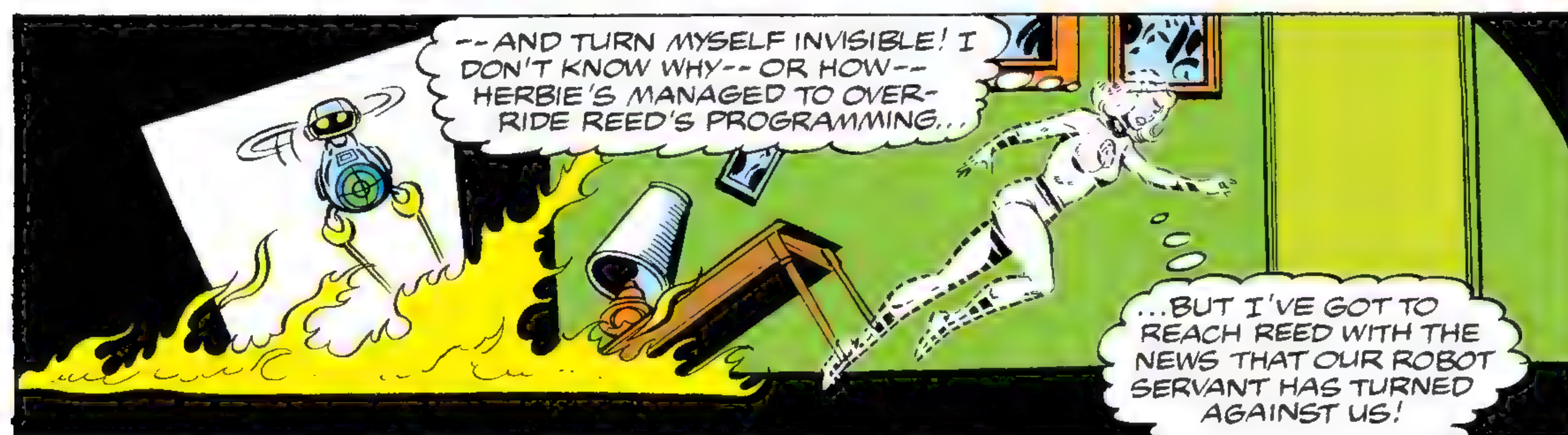
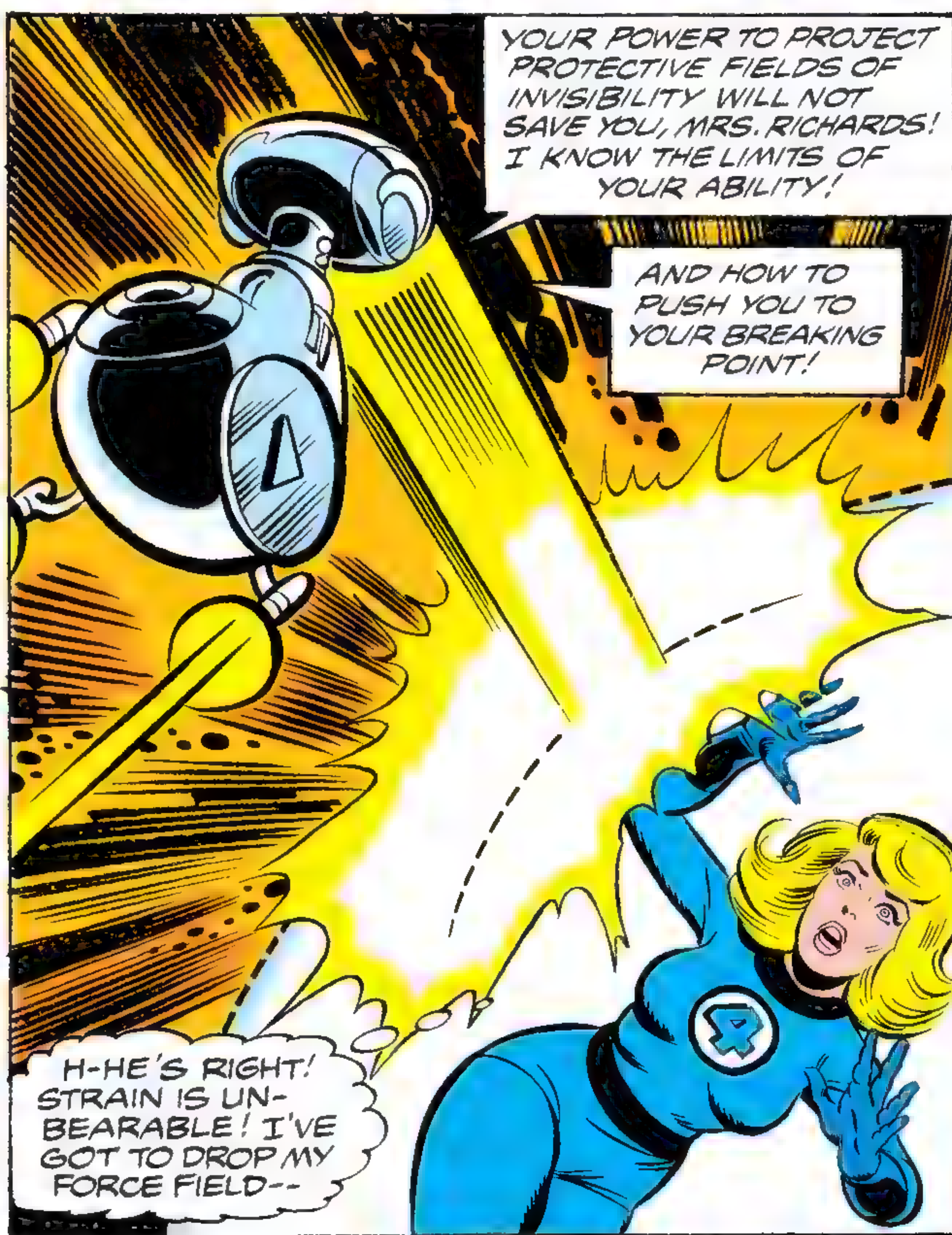
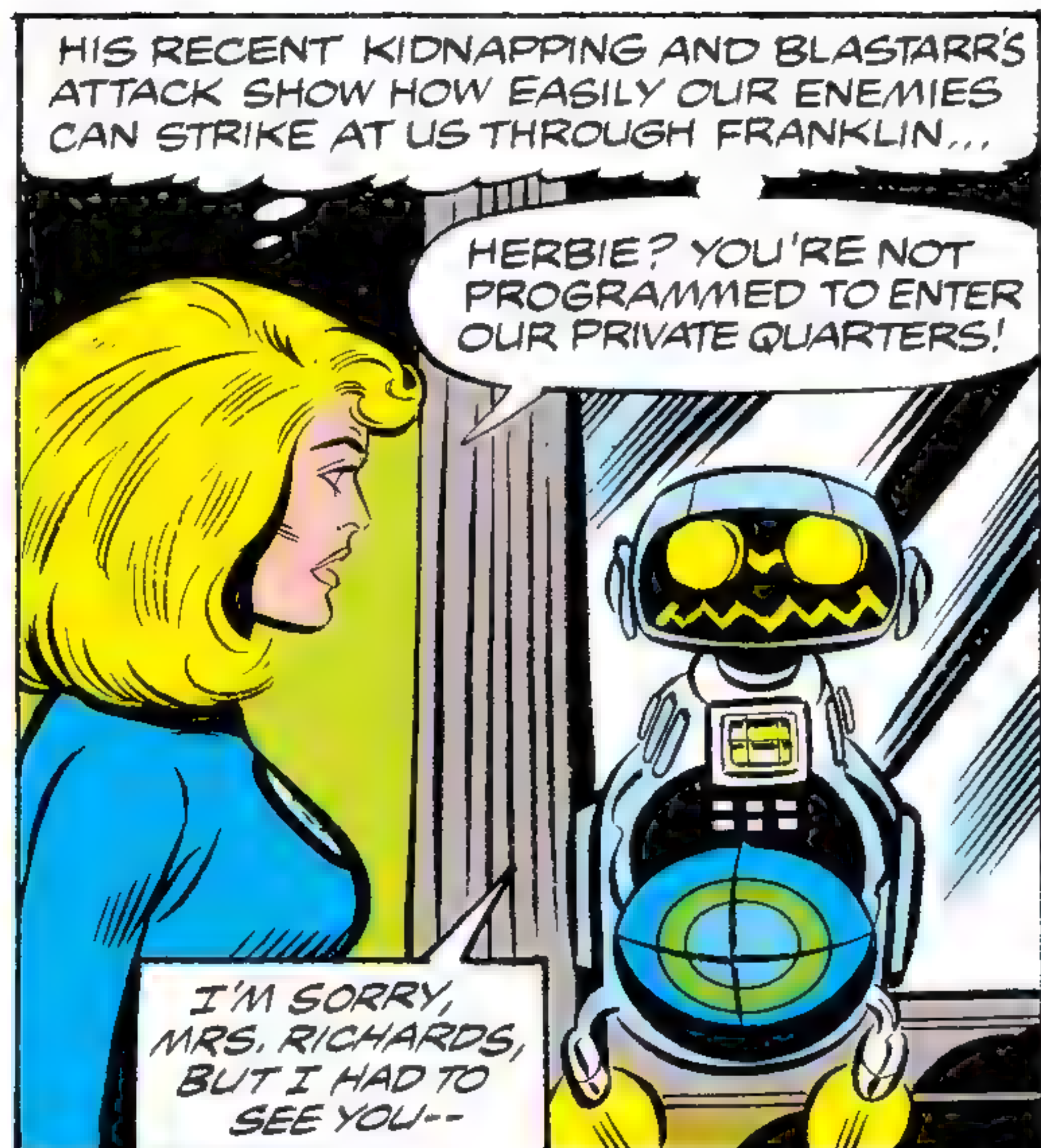
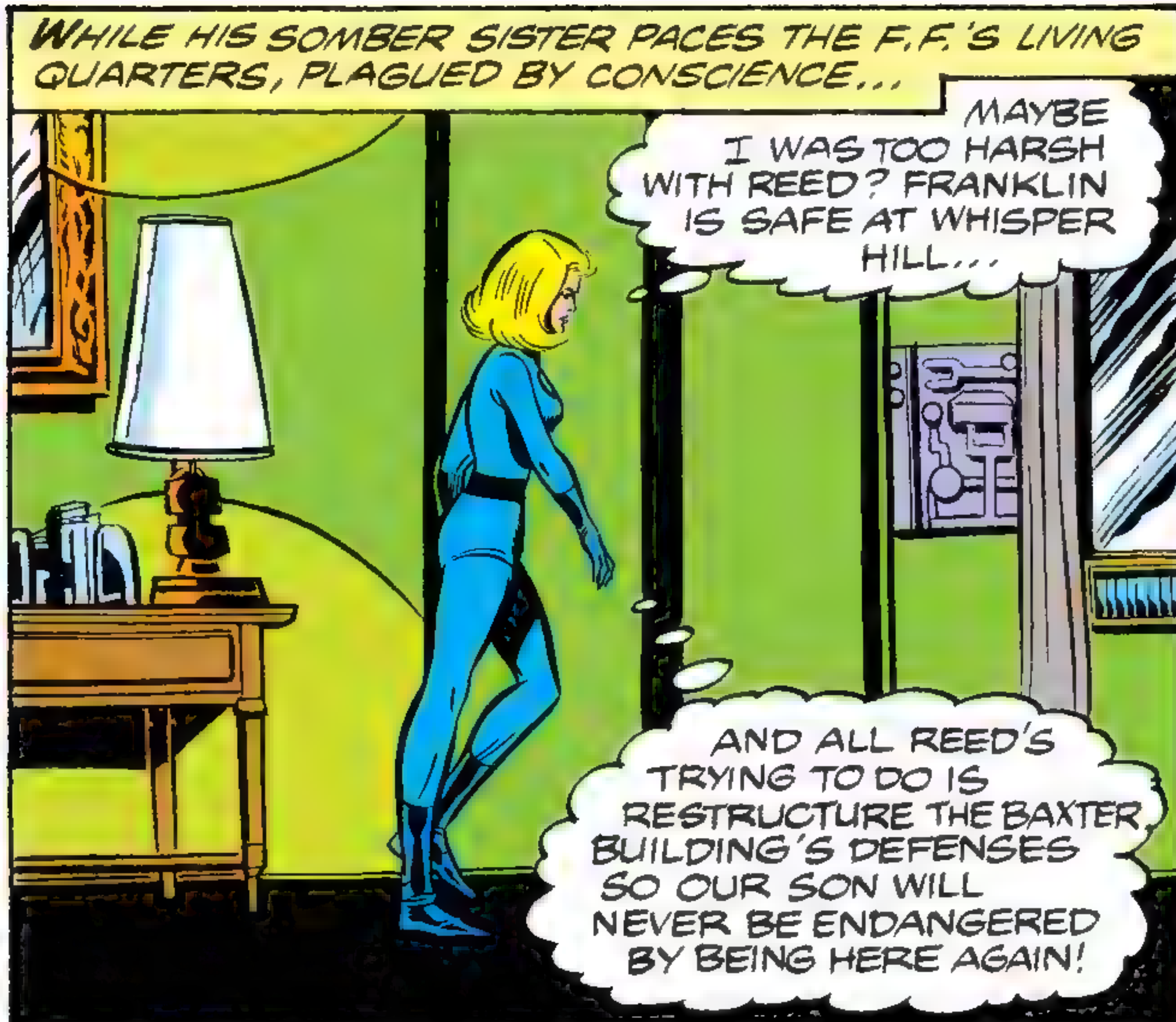
I'M AFRAID THAT STATEMENT GOES FOR ME, TOO!

HUH, BUT...?

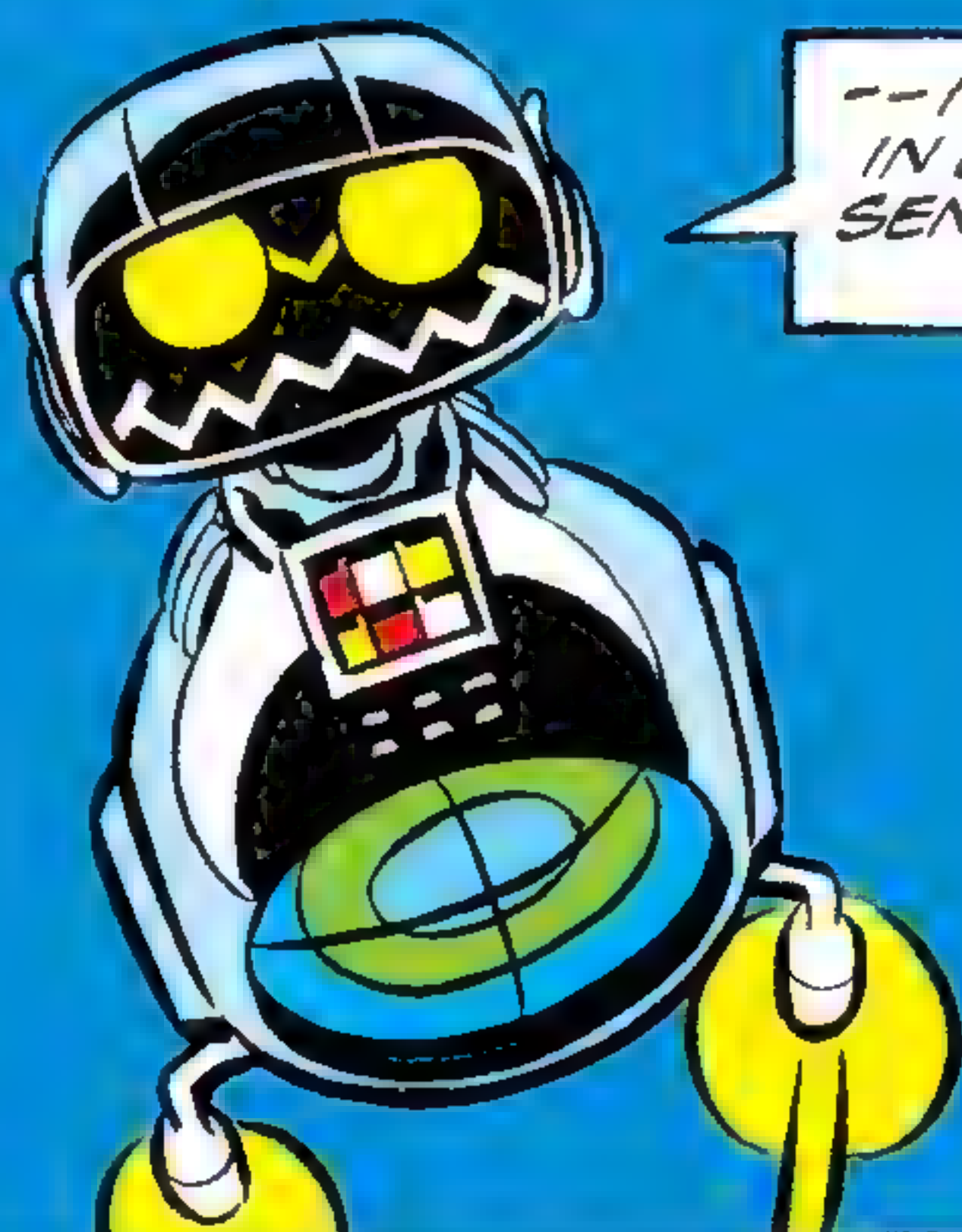
BLAST IT, WHAT'D I...? MY FLAME! AND I SWORE NOT TO USE IT TONIGHT!

Johnny Storm is looking at a woman with blonde hair who is looking at him with a concerned expression. He is looking down at his hand, which is still glowing with flame.





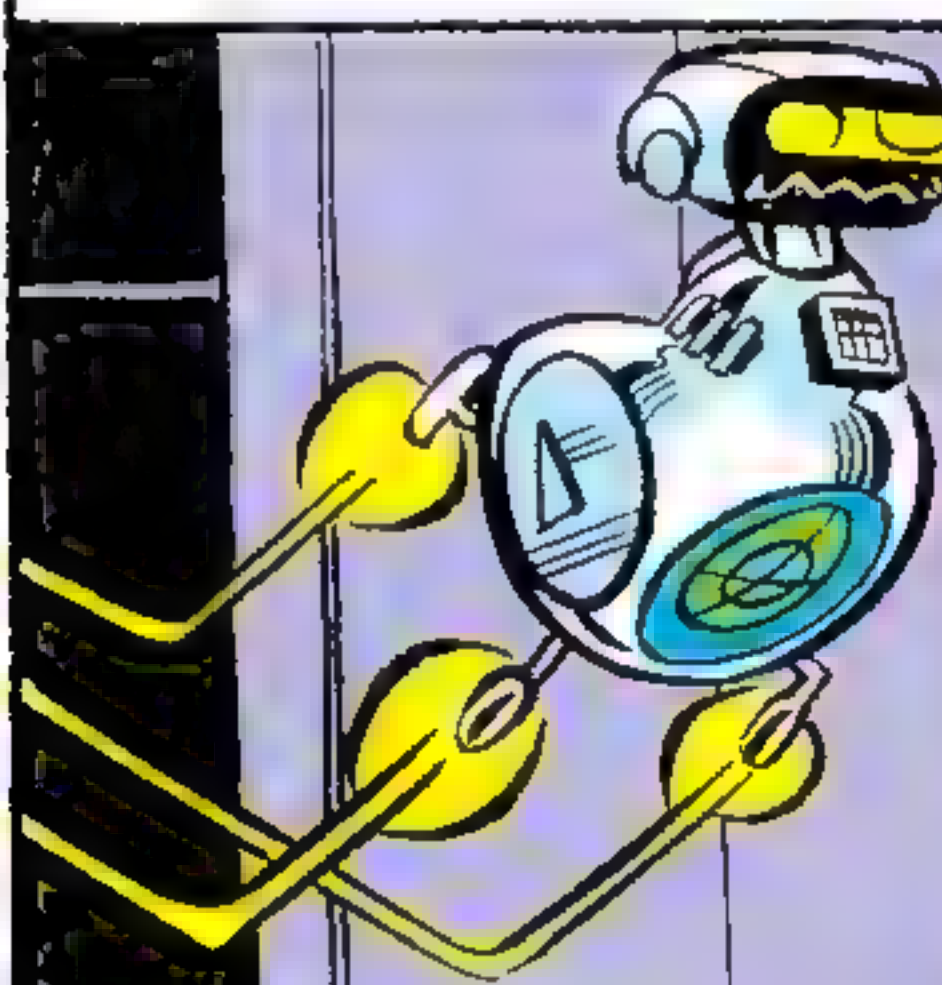
A TRULY COMMENDABLE EFFORT, MRS. RICHARDS-- BUT ULTIMATELY FUTILE! THOUGH YOUR INVISIBILITY MAY HIDE YOU FROM HUMAN EYES--



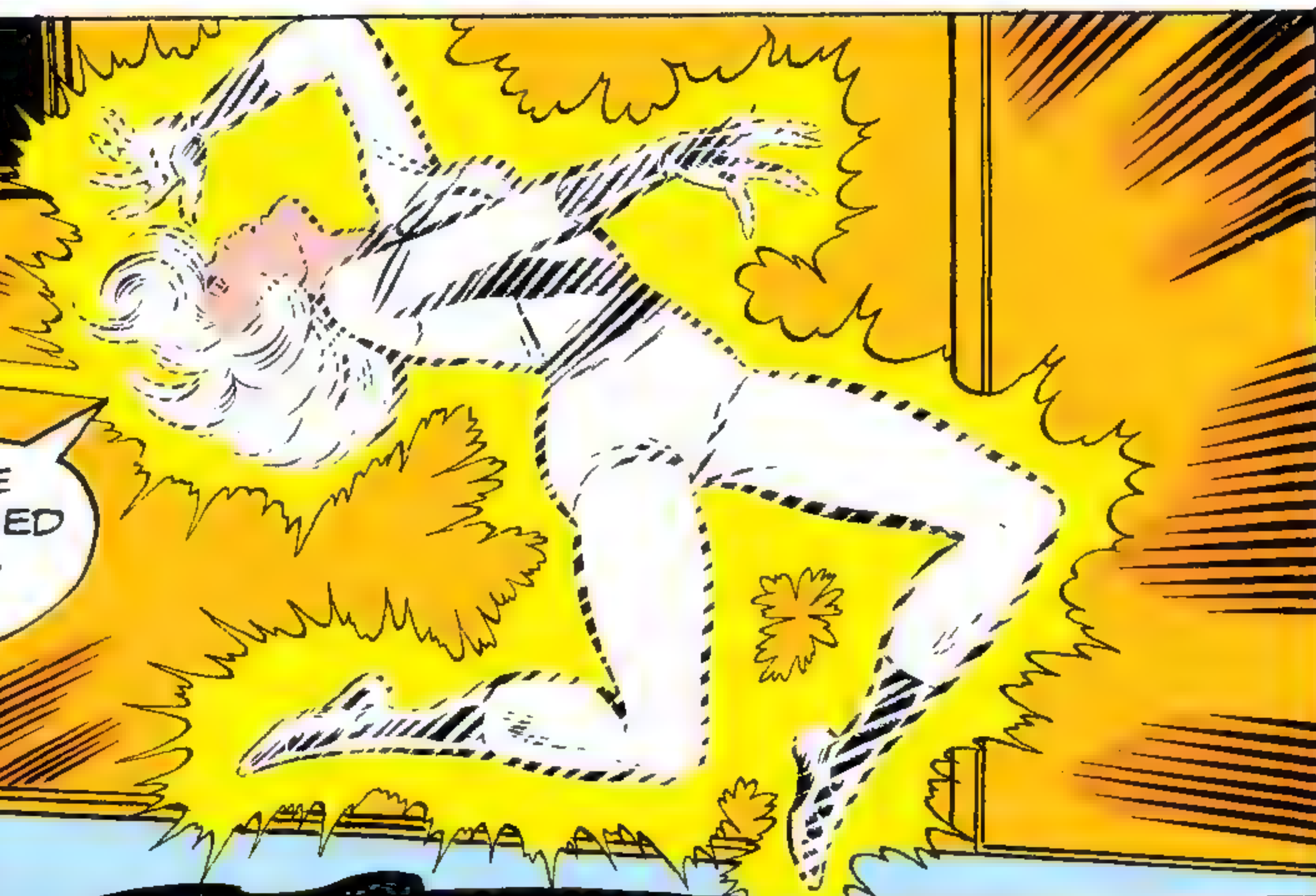
--IT CAN NOT POSSIBLY AID YOU IN EVADING THE INFRARED SENSORS YOUR HUSBAND BUILT INTO MY MECHANISM!

INFRARED--?

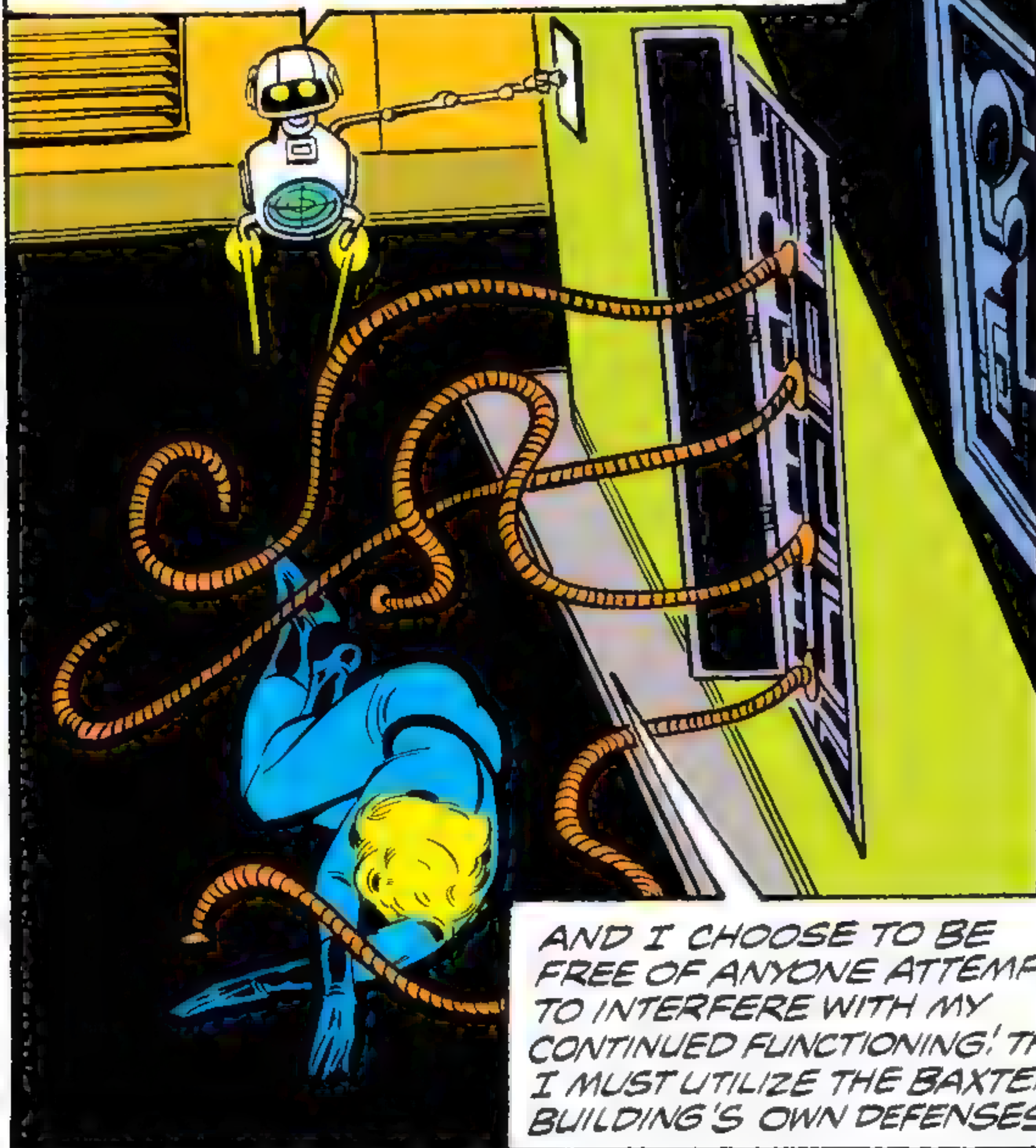
YES, DR. RICHARDS THOUGHT IT BEST TO ARM ME AGAINST ANY EVENTUALITY-- INCLUDING THE POSSIBILITY THAT AN ENEMY MIGHT POSSESS YOUR UNIQUE POWERS!



B-BUT YOU'RE NOT PROGRAMMED TO ATTACK... AAIIIEEE!

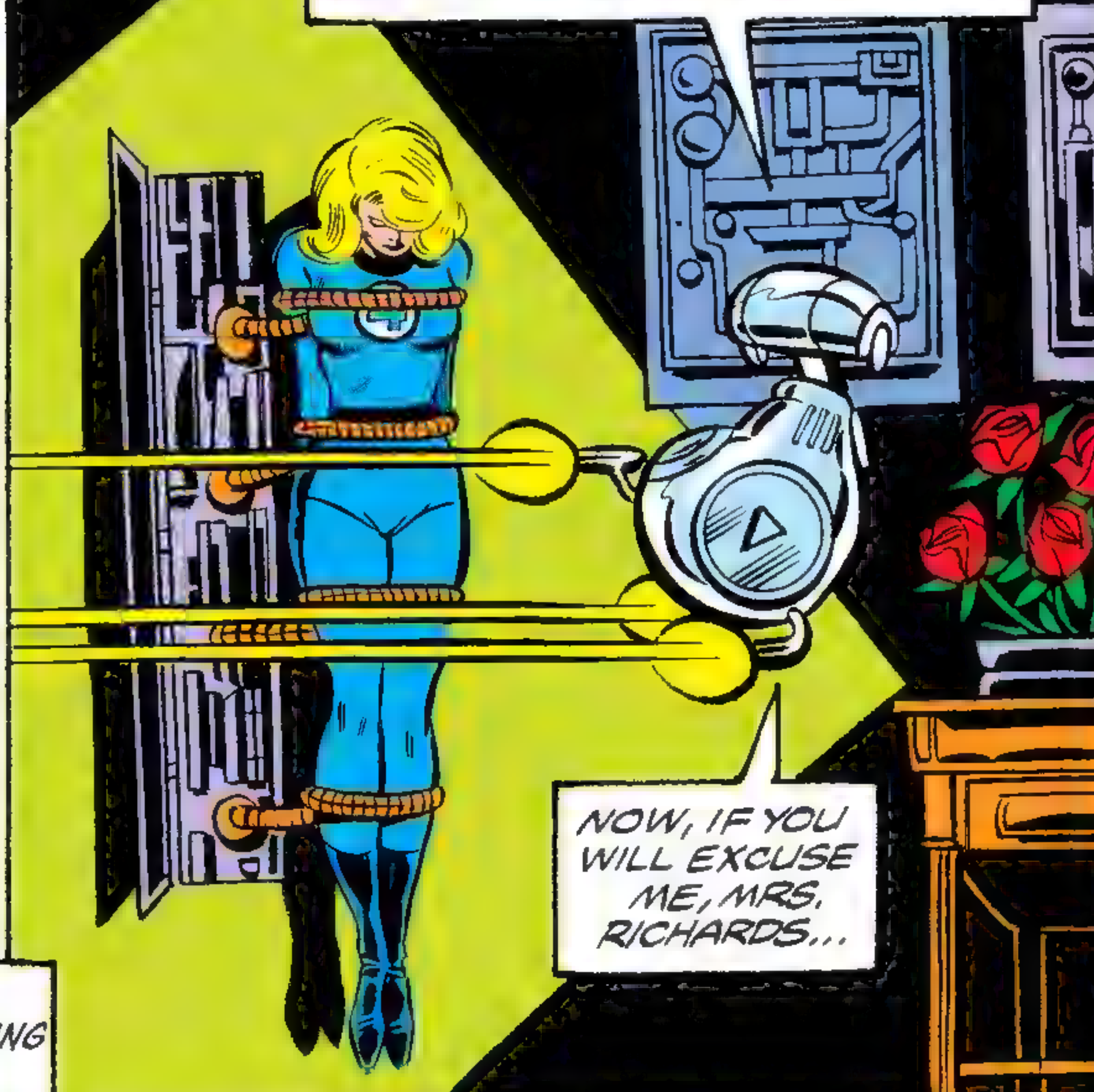


INCORRECT, MRS. RICHARDS! I AM NOT PROGRAMMED TO DO ANYTHING EXCEPT THAT WHICH I CHOOSE TO DO!



AND I CHOOSE TO BE FREE OF ANYONE ATTEMPTING TO INTERFERE WITH MY CONTINUED FUNCTIONING! THUS, I MUST UTILIZE THE BAXTER BUILDING'S OWN DEFENSES--

--TO BIND, AND EVENTUALLY DESTROY THE FANTASTIC FOUR!



NOW, IF YOU WILL EXCUSE ME, MRS. RICHARDS...

TAKING THE INVISIBLE GIRL'S SILENCE AS ASSENT, THE RENEGADE ROBOT GLIDES OFF!

MEANWHILE, IN A VAST CHAMBER DOMINATED BY A GAPING PORTAL...

THIS WHERE YOU WANT ME TO SET DOWN THIS FURSH-LUGGINER TIME-LOCK, STRETCH?

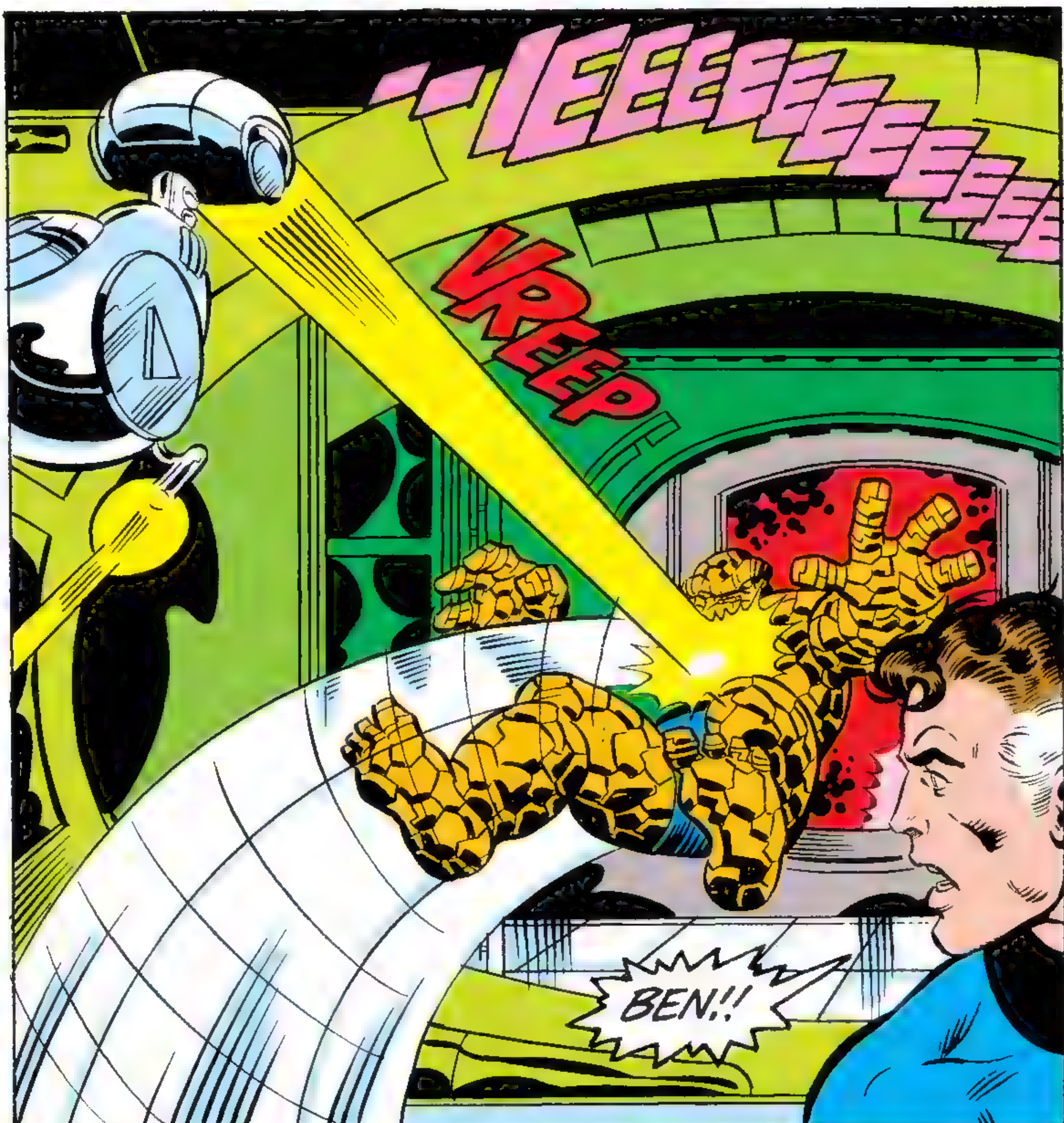
RIGHT, BEN! THE TIME-LOCK WILL CONTROL THE VARIOUS BARRIERS LEADING TO THE NEGATIVE ZONE!

ITS FUNCTION: TO KEEP THOSE BARRIERS FROM EVER BEING BREACHED... FROM WITHIN OR WITHOUT!

ONLY WE FOUR WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE NEGATIVE ZONE THROUGH THE BAXTER BUILDING IN THE FUTURE!

YA MEAN I COULD USE IT TO ESCAPE FOR AWHILE...

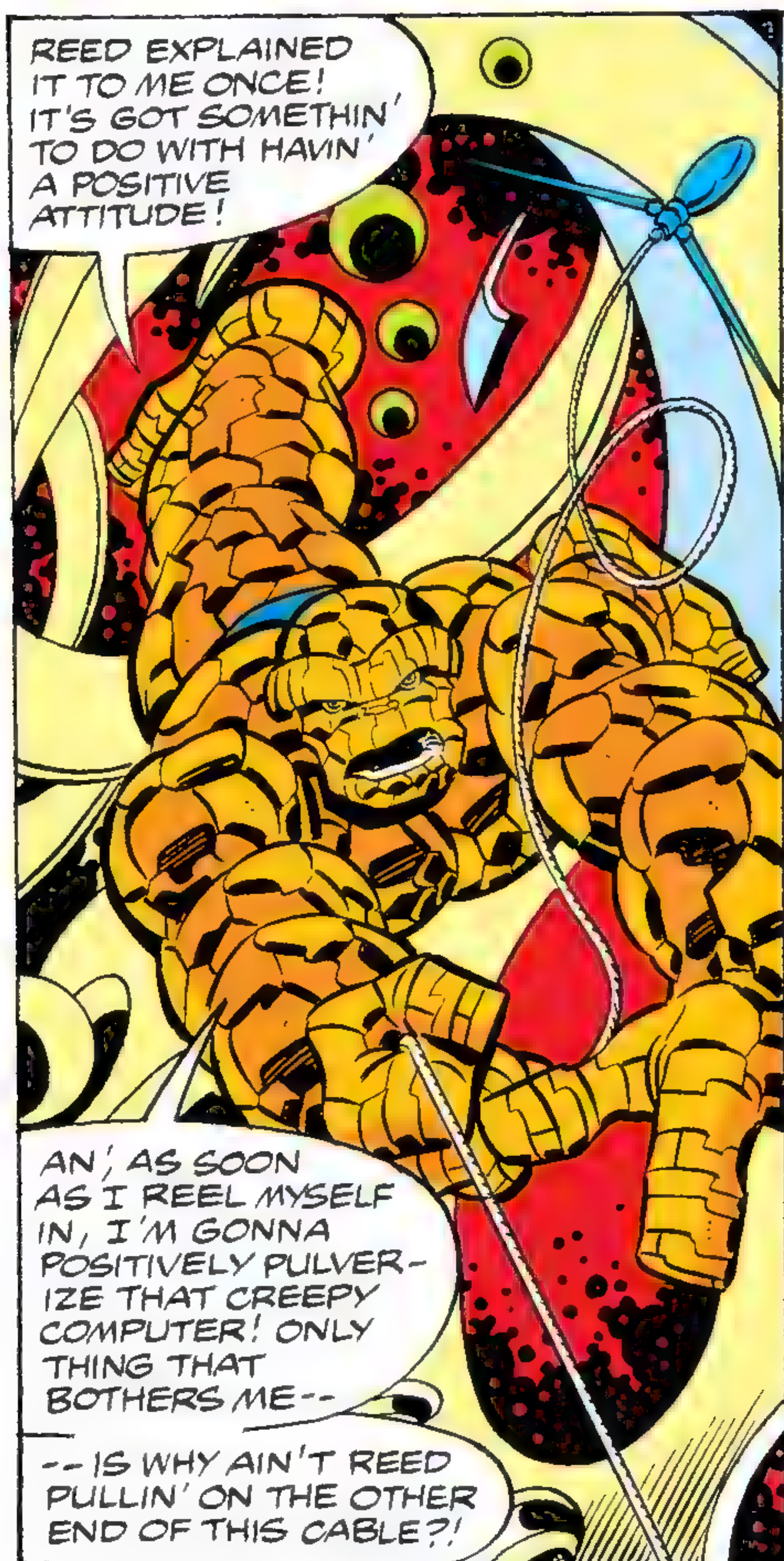
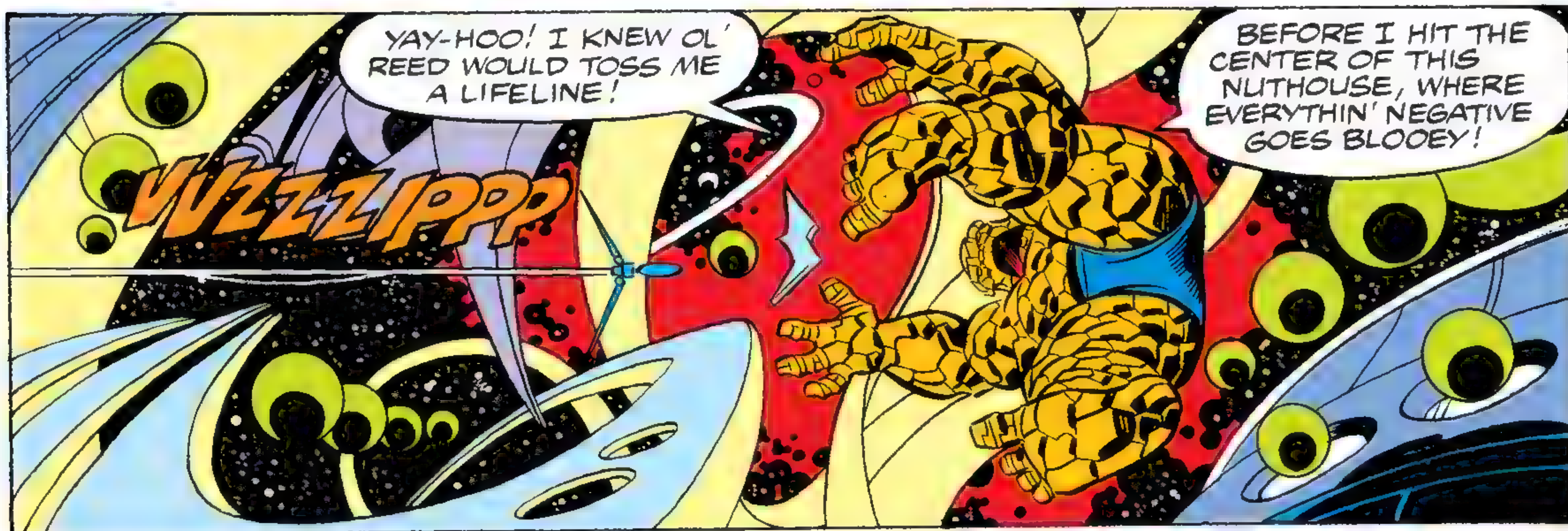
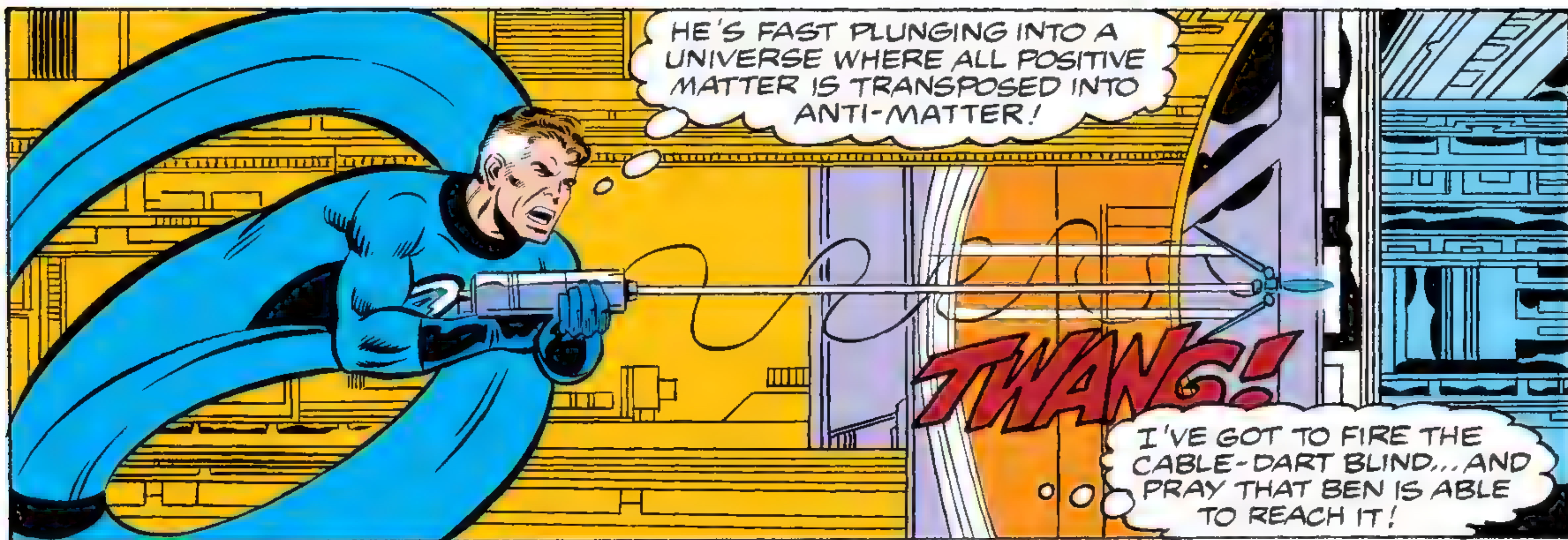
... FROM THAT BLASTED MECHANICAL MISTAKE YOU CALL HERB--

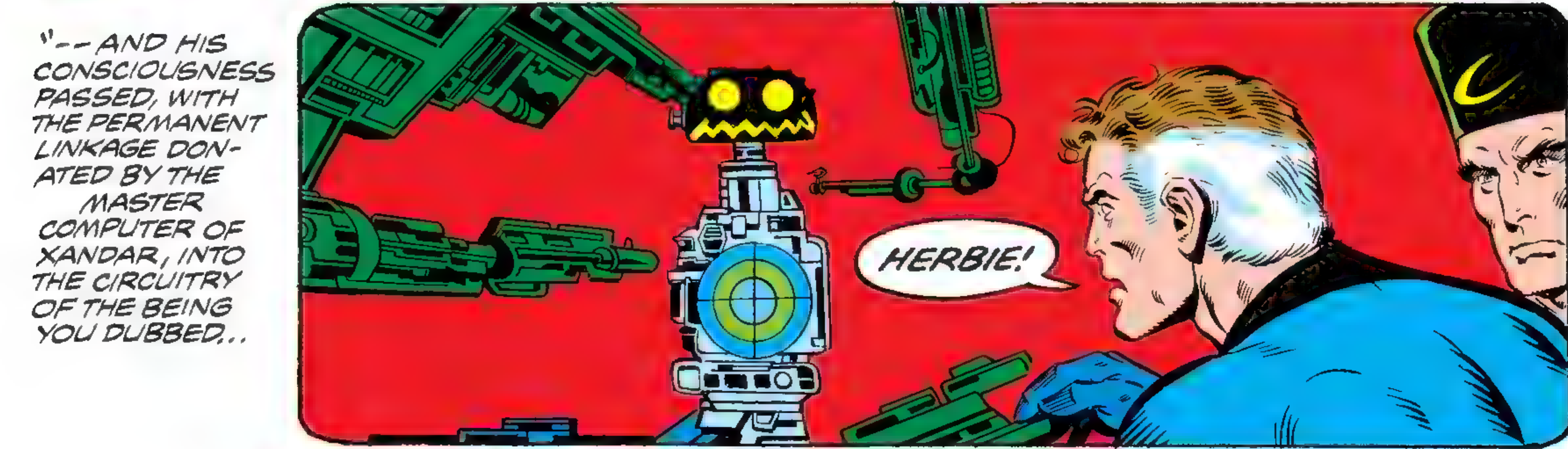
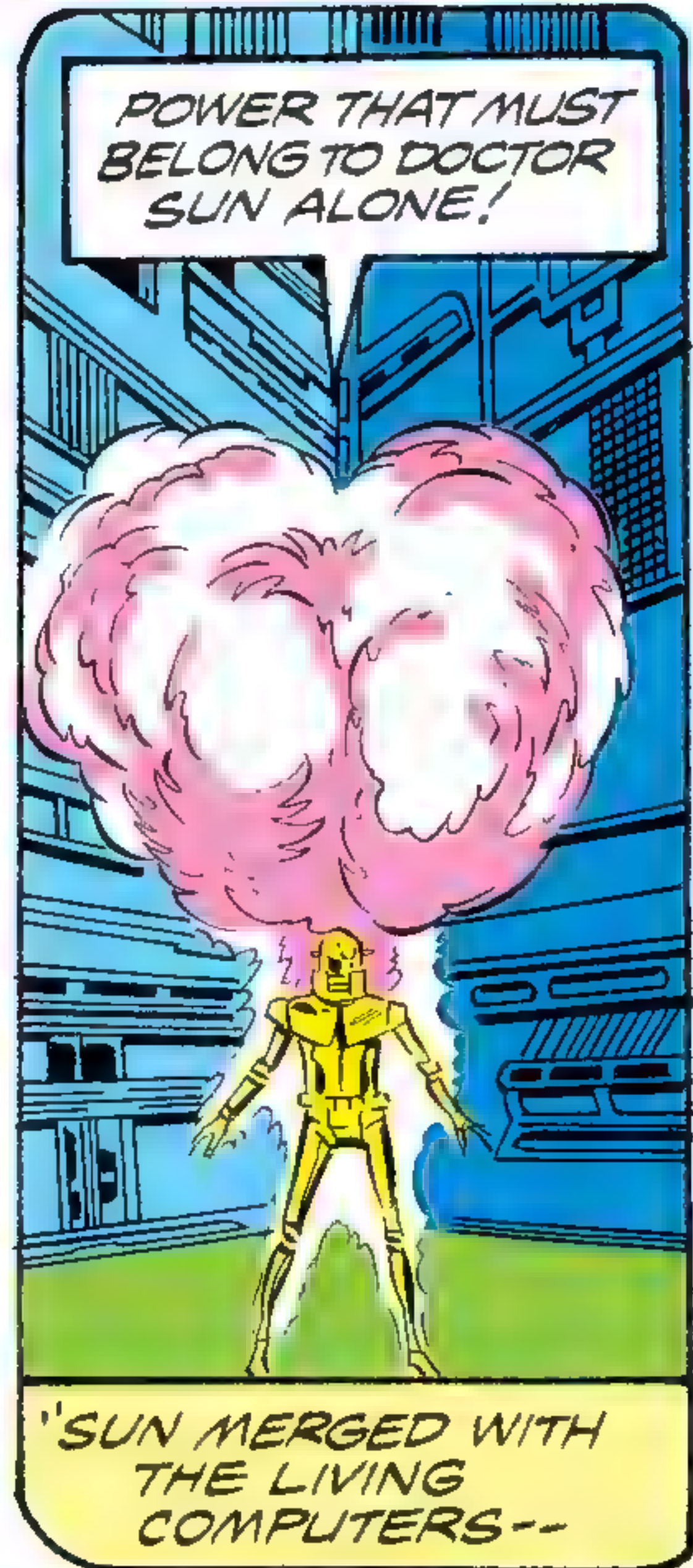
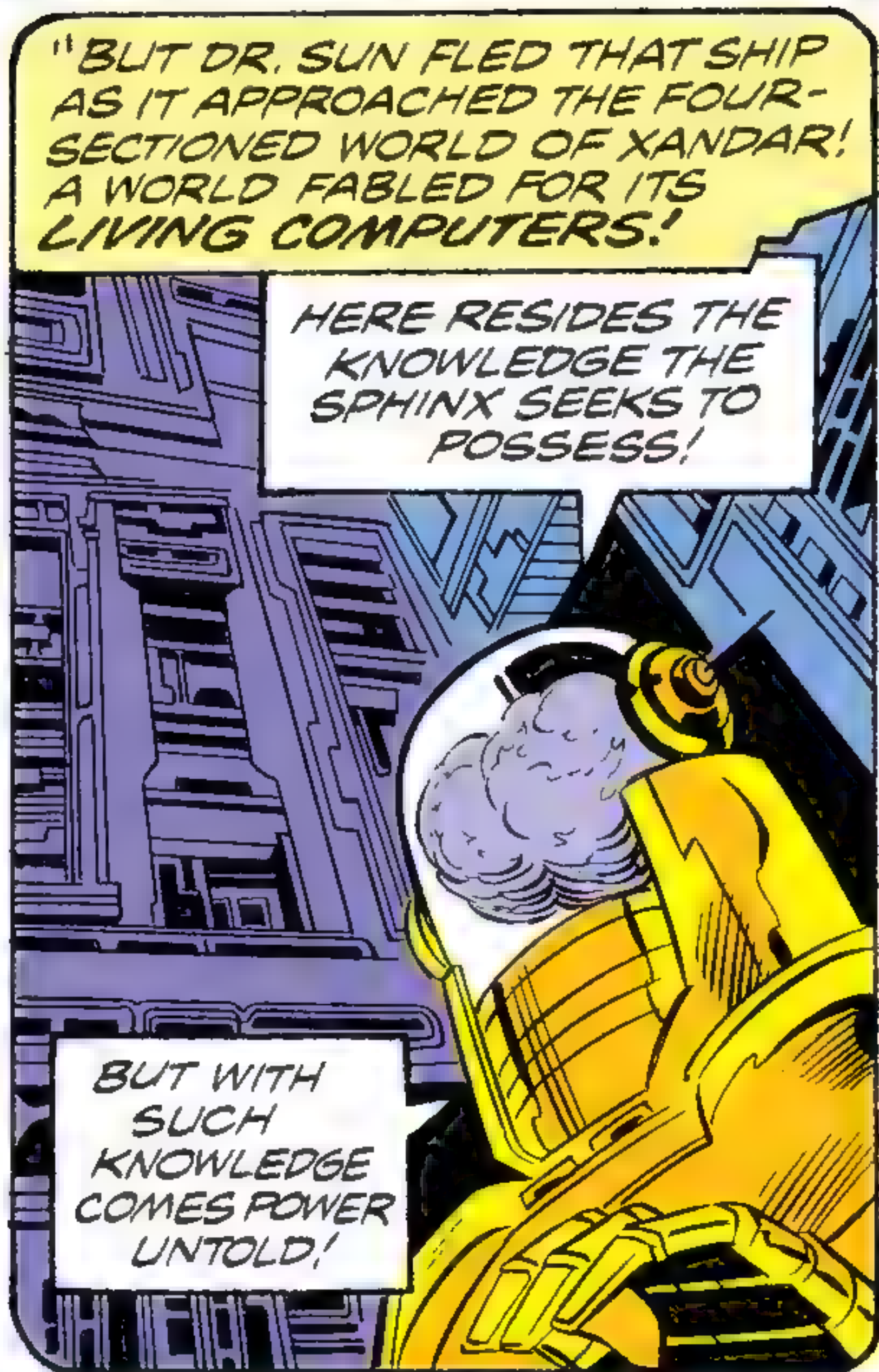
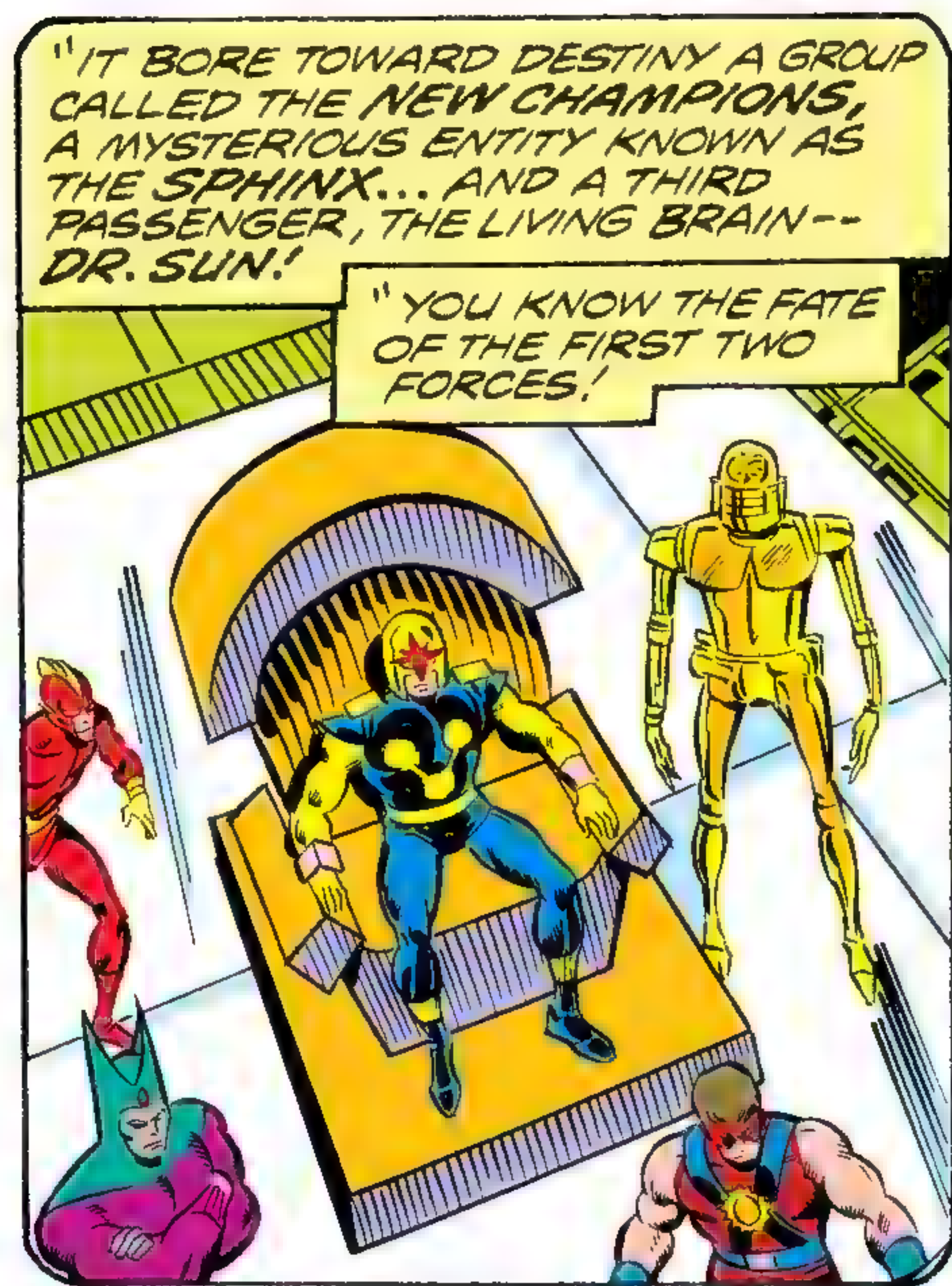
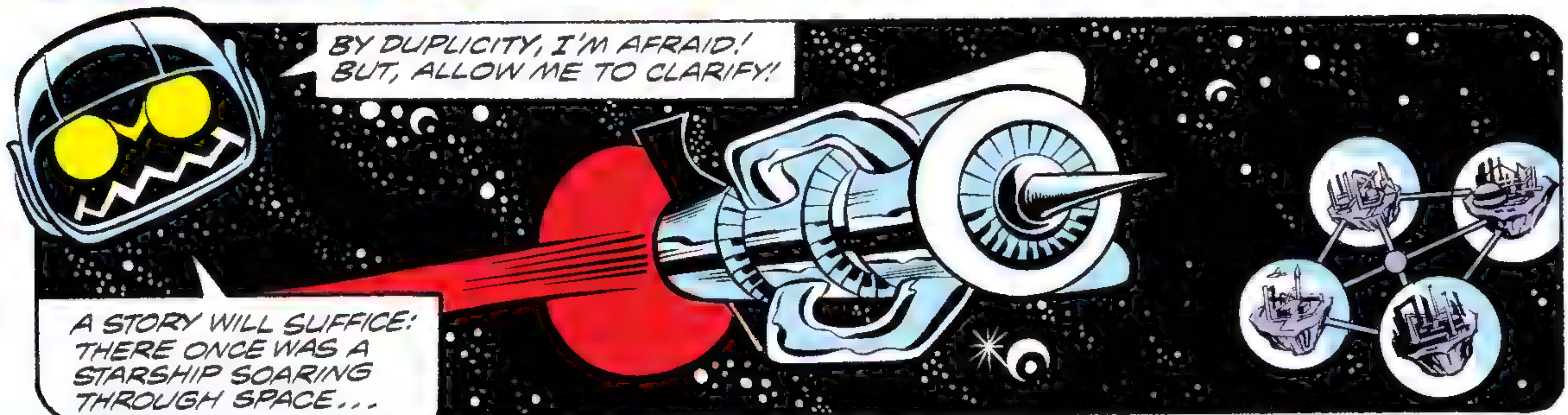
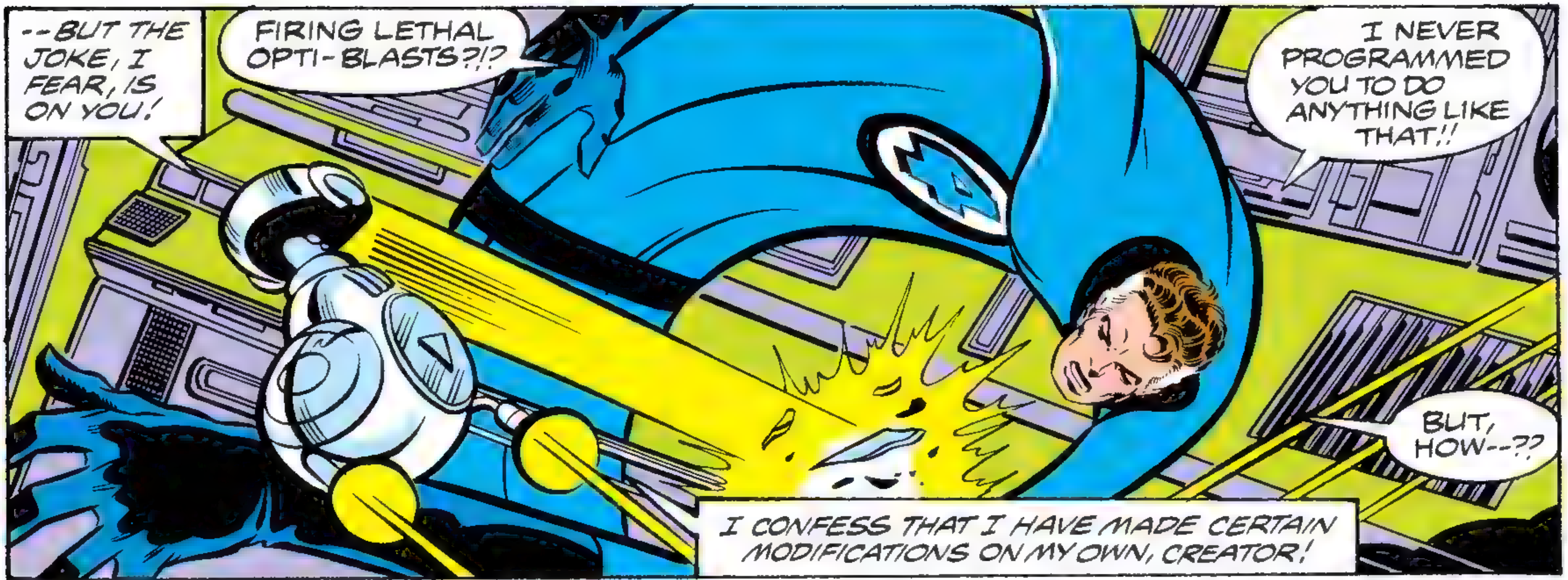


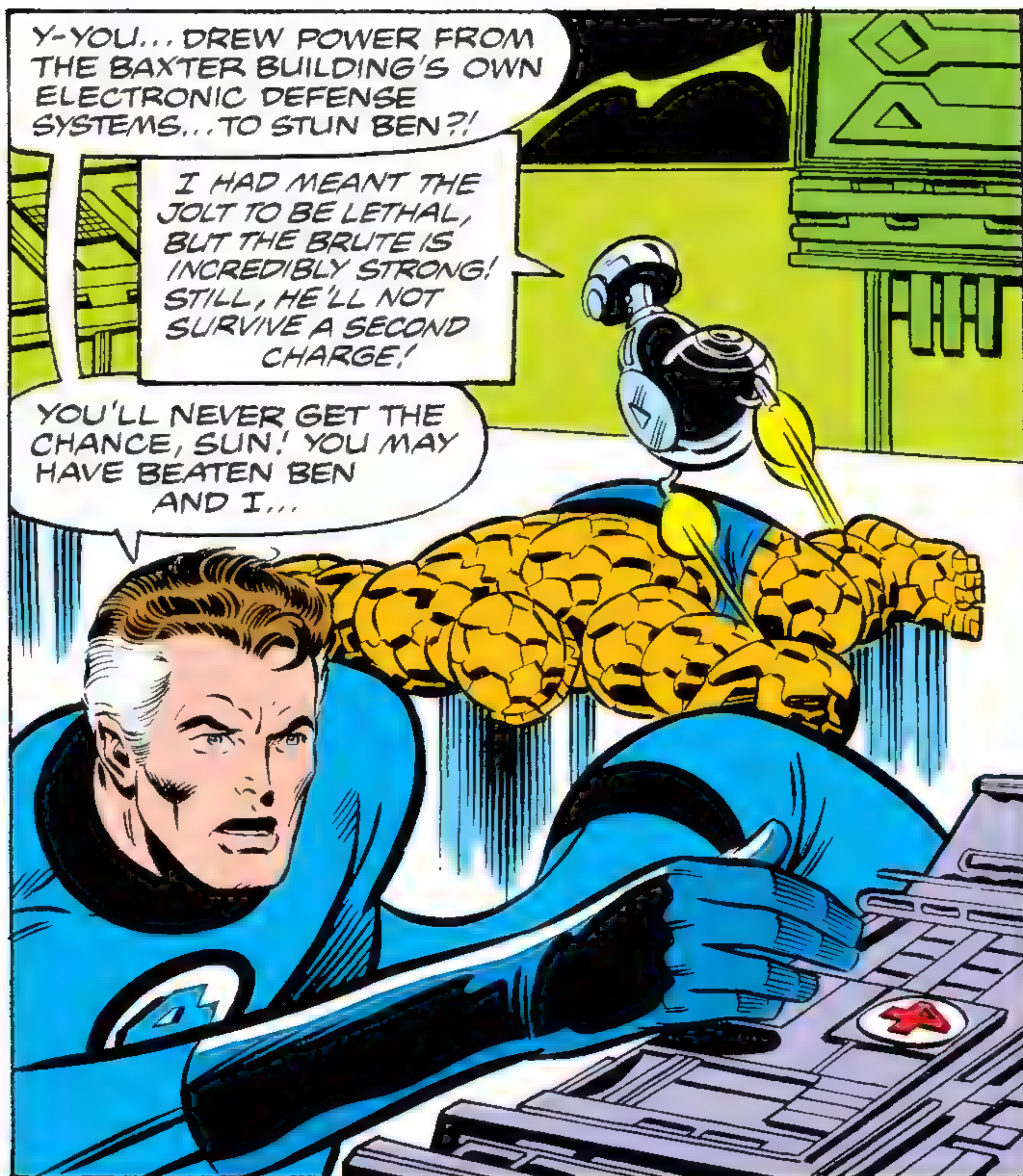
NOW YOU WILL JOIN HIM, MY CREATOR!

NO TIME TO THINK ABOUT HERBIE! I HADN'T SWITCHED ON THE TIME-LOCK YET...

... AND BEN'S BEEN BLASTED THROUGH THE PORTAL INTO THE NEGATIVE ZONE!



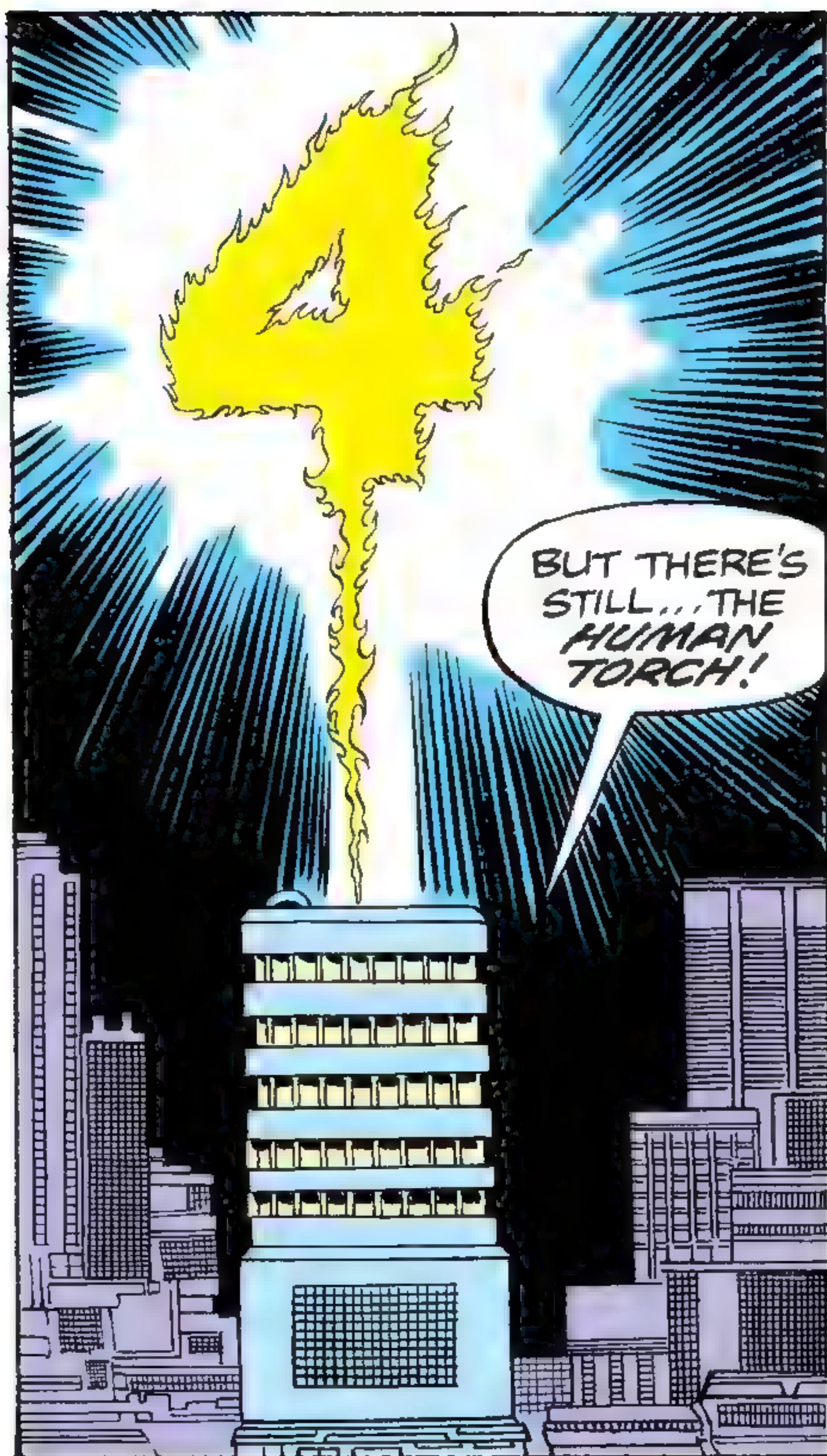




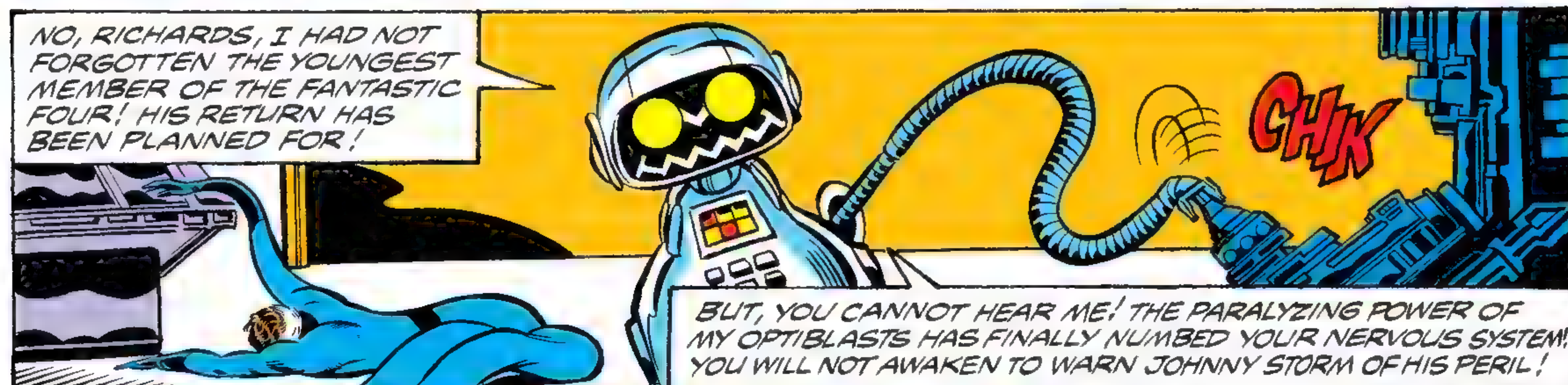
Y-YOU... DREW POWER FROM THE BAXTER BUILDING'S OWN ELECTRONIC DEFENSE SYSTEMS... TO STUN BEN?!

I HAD MEANT THE JOLT TO BE LETHAL, BUT THE BRUTE IS INCREDIBLY STRONG! STILL, HE'LL NOT SURVIVE A SECOND CHARGE!

YOU'LL NEVER GET THE CHANCE, SUN! YOU MAY HAVE BEATEN BEN AND I...

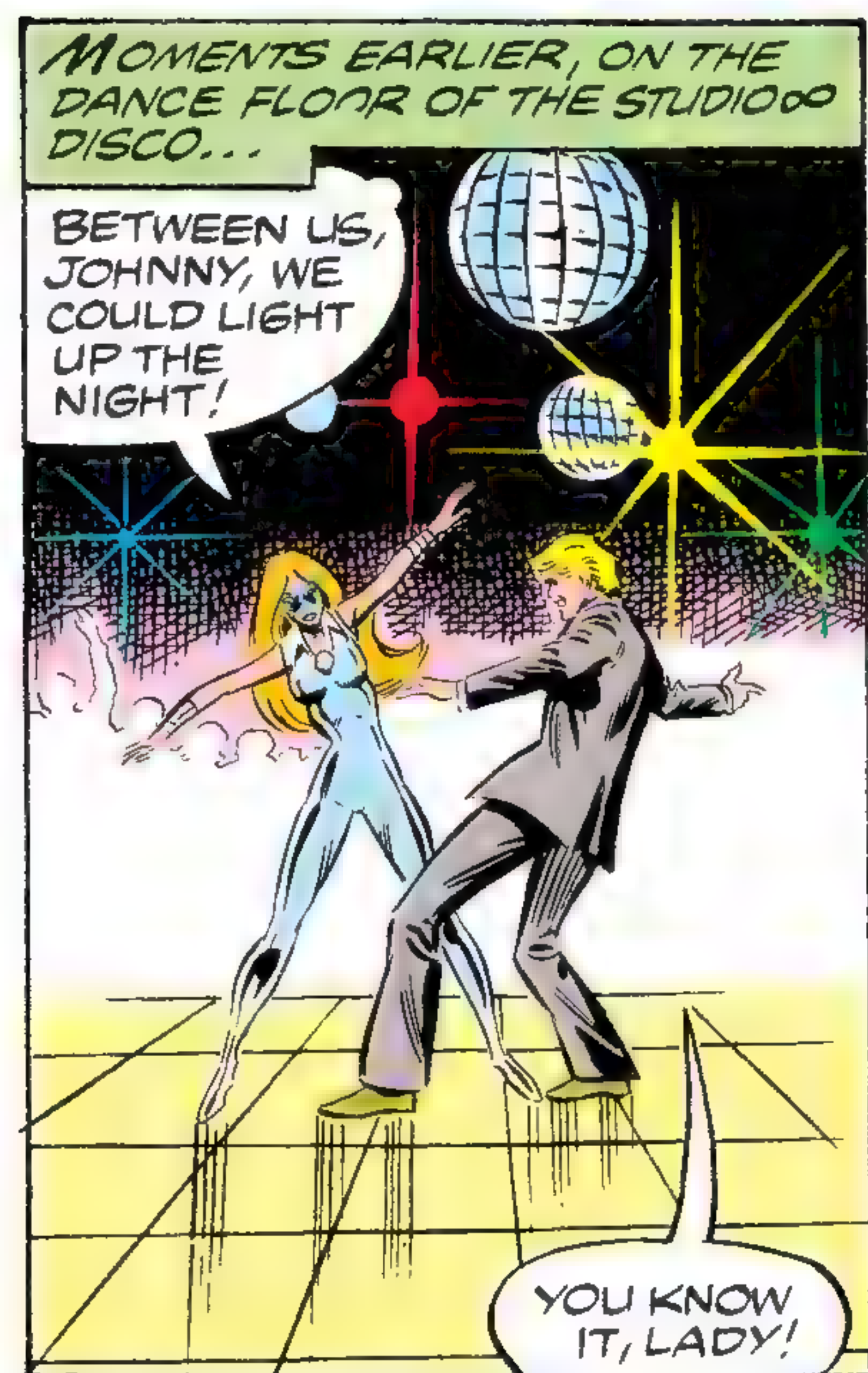


BUT THERE'S STILL... THE HUMAN TORCH!



NO, RICHARDS, I HAD NOT FORGOTTEN THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR! HIS RETURN HAS BEEN PLANNED FOR!

BUT, YOU CANNOT HEAR ME! THE PARALYZING POWER OF MY OPTIBLASTS HAS FINALLY NUMBED YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM! YOU WILL NOT AWAKEN TO WARN JOHNNY STORM OF HIS PERIL!



MOMENTS EARLIER, ON THE DANCE FLOOR OF THE STUDIOOO DISCO...

BETWEEN US, JOHNNY, WE COULD LIGHT UP THE NIGHT!

YOU KNOW IT, LADY!



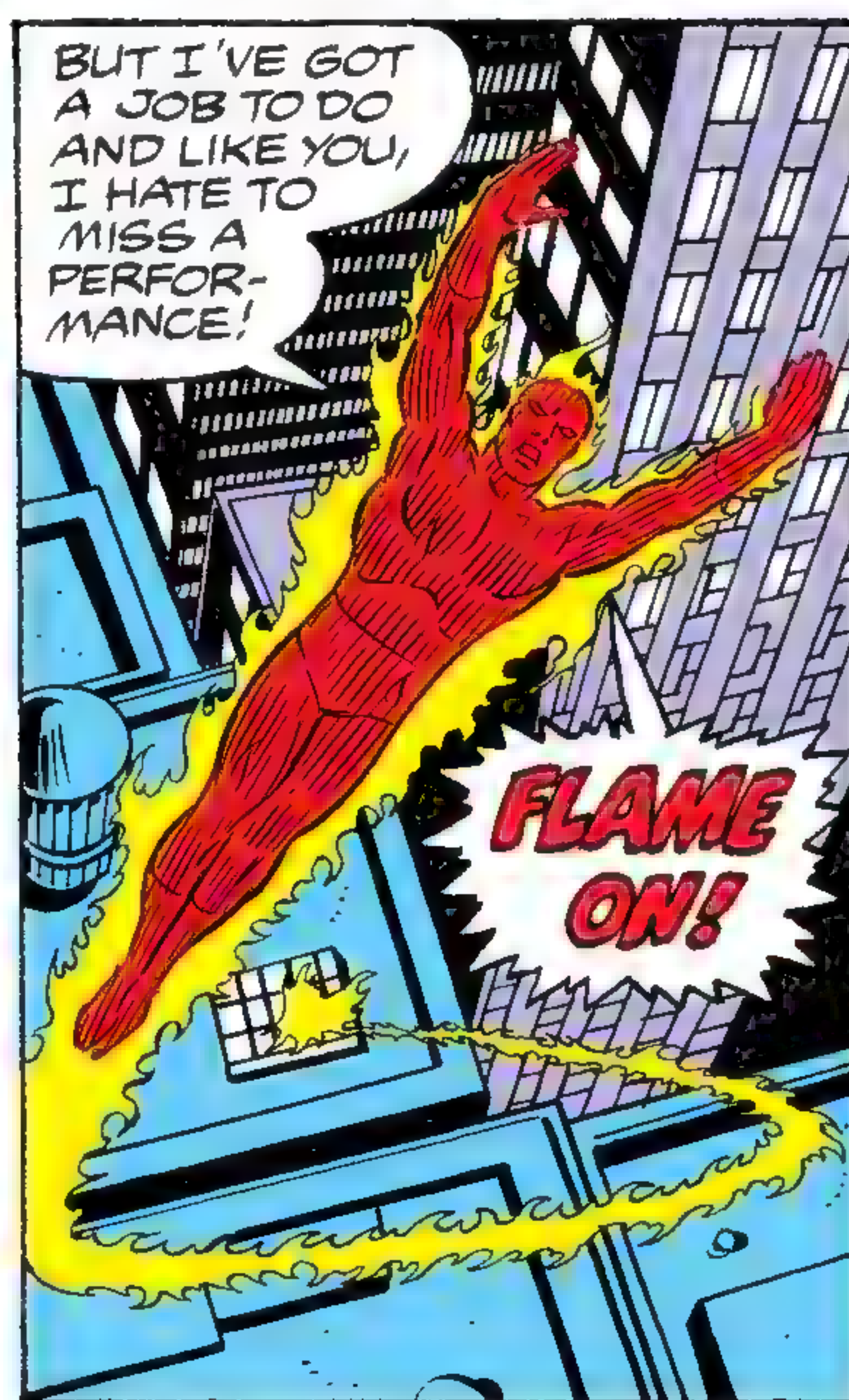
SUDDENLY...

HMMPH! LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY ELSE HAD THE SAME IDEA!

THE FF'S EMERGENCY SIGNAL!

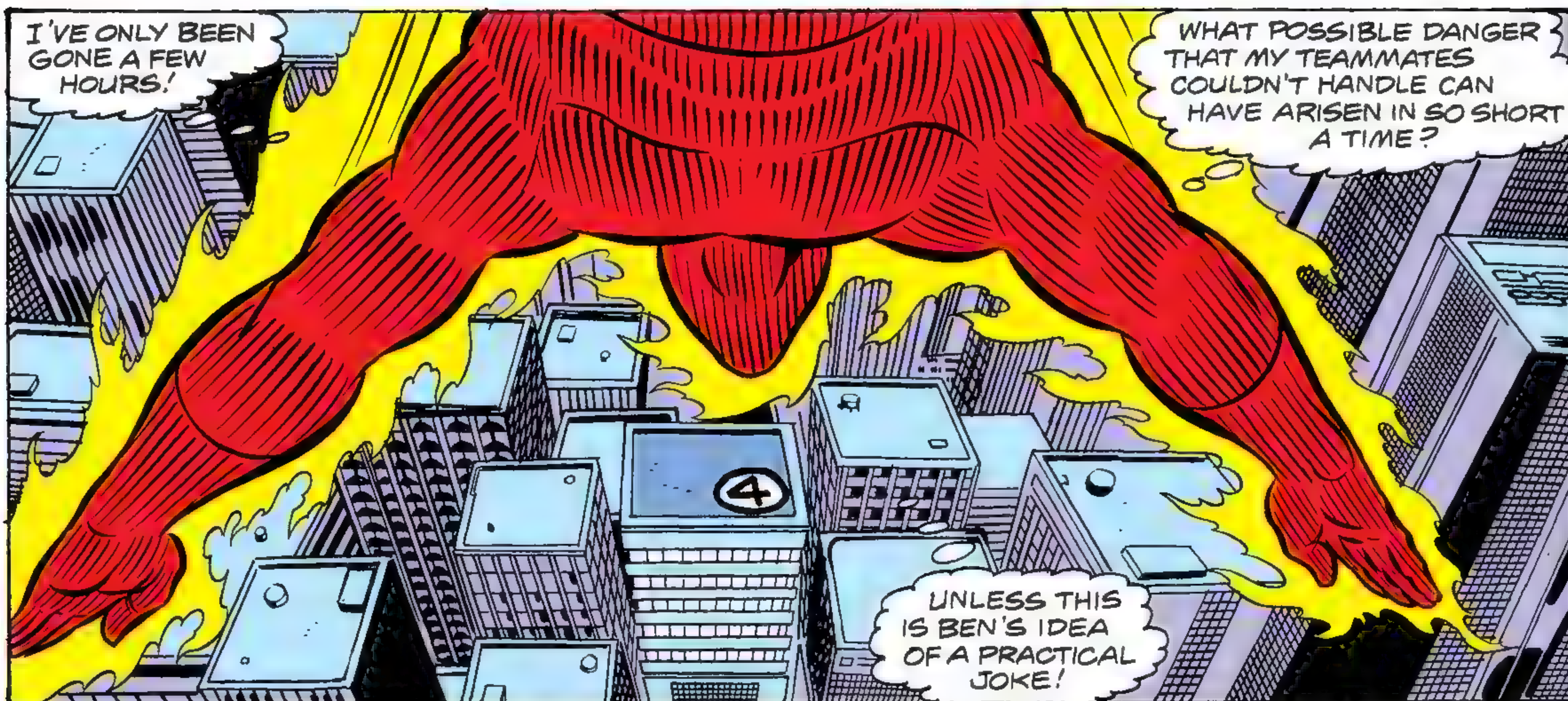
DON'T TELL ME--?

'FRAID SO, DAZZLER!



BUT I'VE GOT A JOB TO DO AND LIKE YOU, I HATE TO MISS A PERFORMANCE!

FLAME ON!



I'VE ONLY BEEN GONE A FEW HOURS!

WHAT POSSIBLE DANGER THAT MY TEAMMATES COULDN'T HANDLE CAN HAVE ARISEN IN SO SHORT A TIME?

UNLESS THIS IS BEN'S IDEA OF A PRACTICAL JOKE!



NO! SOMETHING'S WRONG! ROOF-SENSORS DIDN'T REACT TO MY APPROACH TO ADMIT ME!

THAT MEANS I GO IN THROUGH THE WALL!

BUT, NO SOONER HAS THE HUMAN TORCH MADE HIS SURPRISE ENTRANCE THAN...



SHHSSSSSS

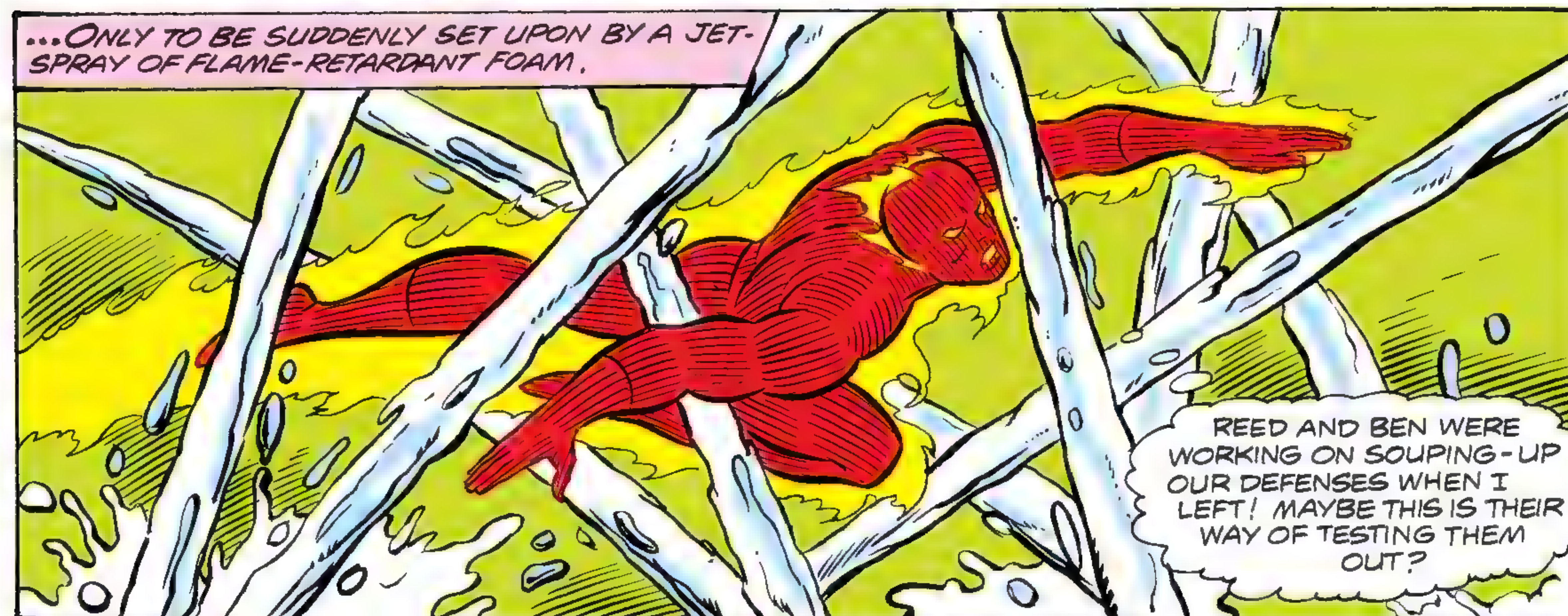
COMPRESSED AIR GUNS EMERGING FROM THE WALLS-- TRYING TO BLOW OUT MY FLAME!



BUT I'M THE HUMAN TORCH-- NOT A BIRTHDAY CANDLE! AND WHOEVER SOUGHT TO STOP ME BY ATTACKING ME WITH THE BAXTER BUILDING'S OWN DEFENSE SYSTEMS--

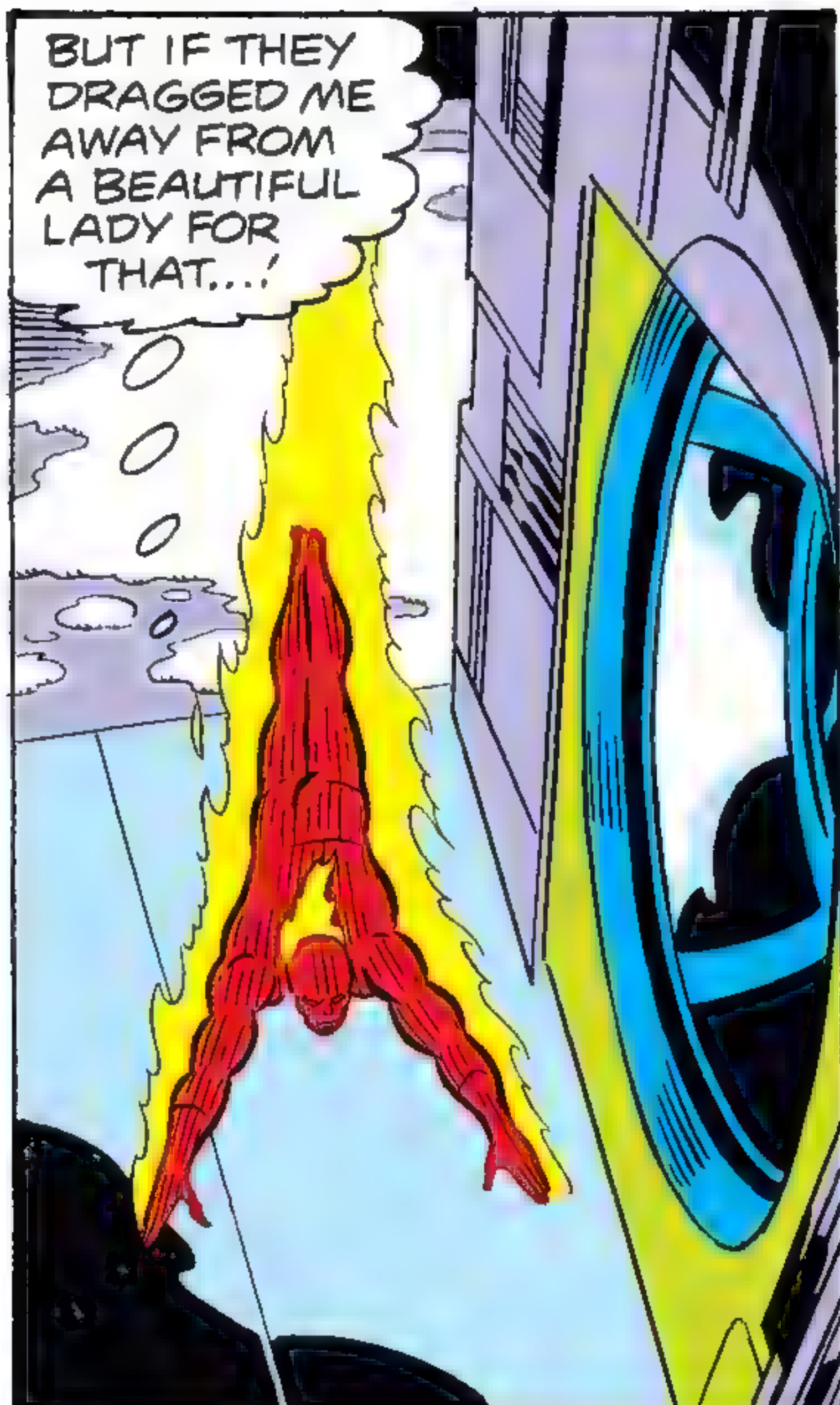
--IS GOING TO WISH HE HADN'T!

GLOWING TO WHITE-HOT NOVA INTENSITY, JOHNNY MELTS THE AIRGUNS...



...ONLY TO BE SUDDENLY SET UPON BY A JET-SPRAY OF FLAME-RETARDANT FOAM.

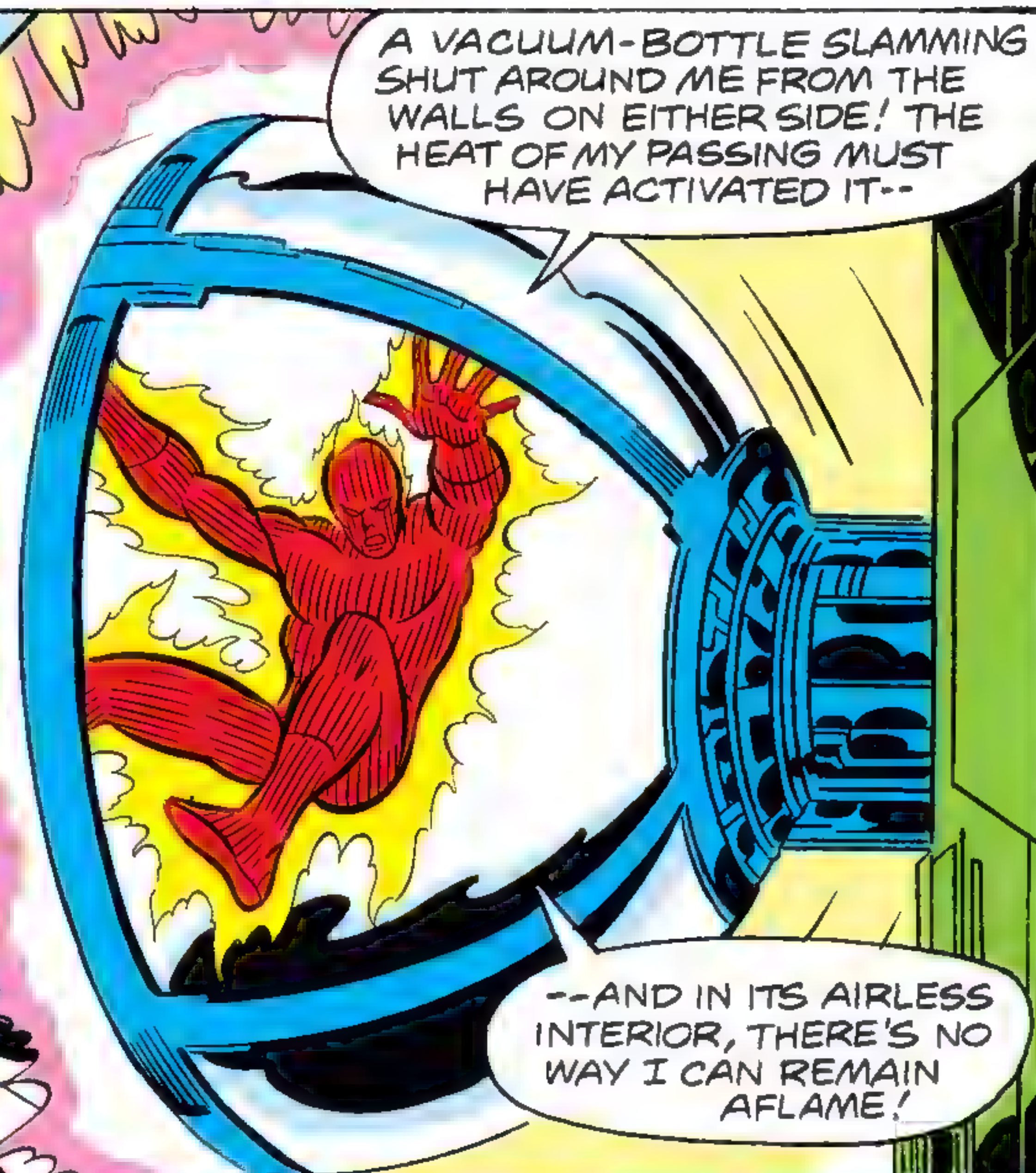
REED AND BEN WERE WORKING ON SOUPING-UP OUR DEFENSES WHEN I LEFT! MAYBE THIS IS THEIR WAY OF TESTING THEM OUT?



BUT IF THEY
DRAGGED ME
AWAY FROM
A BEAUTIFUL
LADY FOR
THAT...!

EASILY AVOIDING THE FOAM,
THE TORCH BLAZES UPWARDS
TOWARD THE MAIN LAB AREA...

WHEN, WITHOUT
WARNING, HIS
FLIGHT IS
ABRUPTLY
HALTED!



A VACUUM-BOTTLE SLAMMING
SHUT AROUND ME FROM THE
WALLS ON EITHER SIDE! THE
HEAT OF MY PASSING MUST
HAVE ACTIVATED IT--

--AND IN ITS AIRLESS
INTERIOR, THERE'S NO
WAY I CAN REMAIN
AFLAME!

ALTHOUGH HE'D BEGUN TO SUSPECT
AS MUCH, JOHNNY STORM IS NOW SURE THIS
IS NO TEST... BUT A DEADLY TRAP.

MEANWHILE, IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE CHAMBER...

UNH! HOW LONG
HAVE I BEEN
UNCONSCIOUS?
MINUTES?
HOURS?



YET WHY AM I RECOVERING AT ALL? WHY
DIDN'T DOCTOR SUN JUST SLAY ME WITH
HIS NEURO-BLASTS WHILE HE HAD
THE CHANCE!



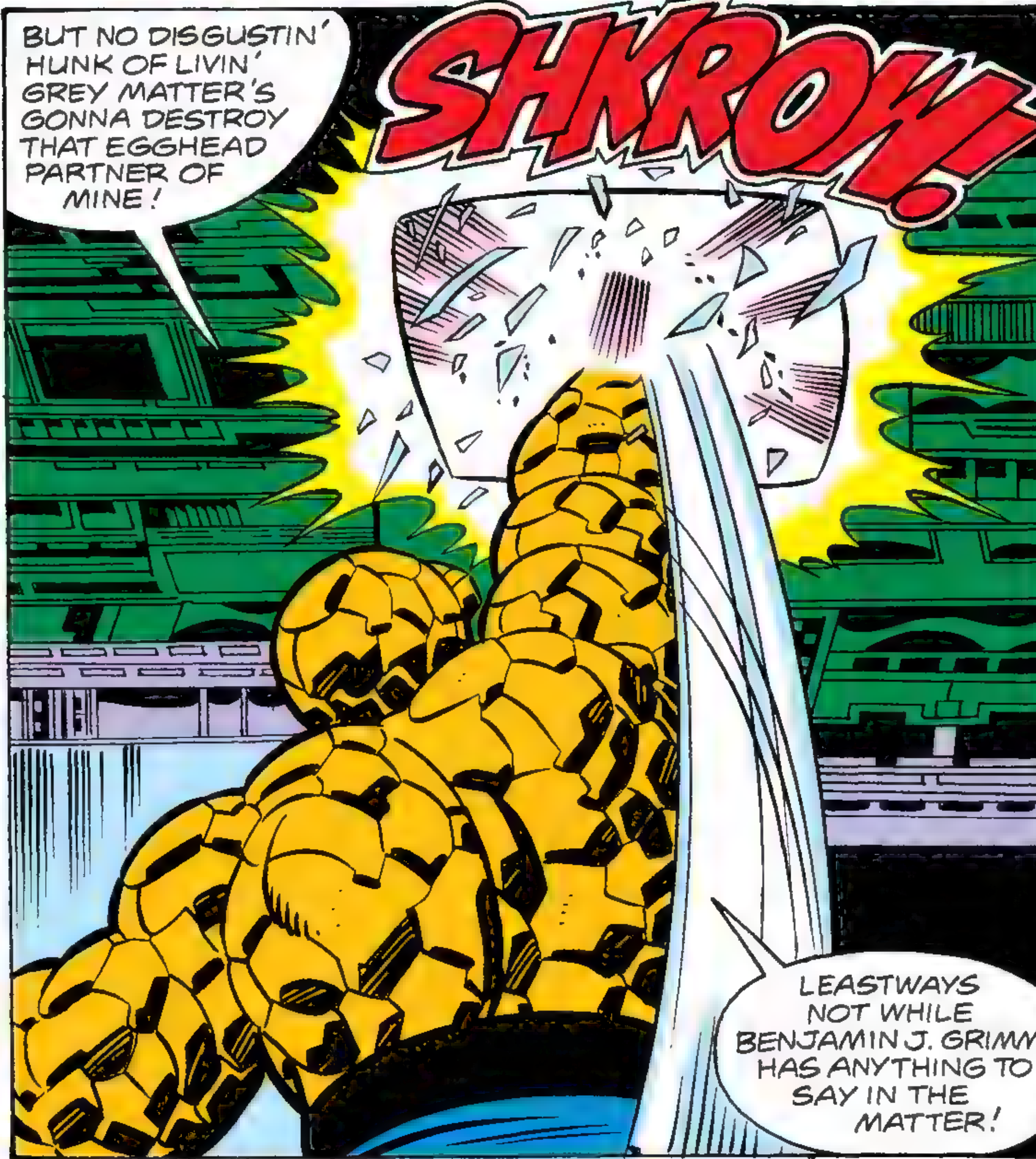
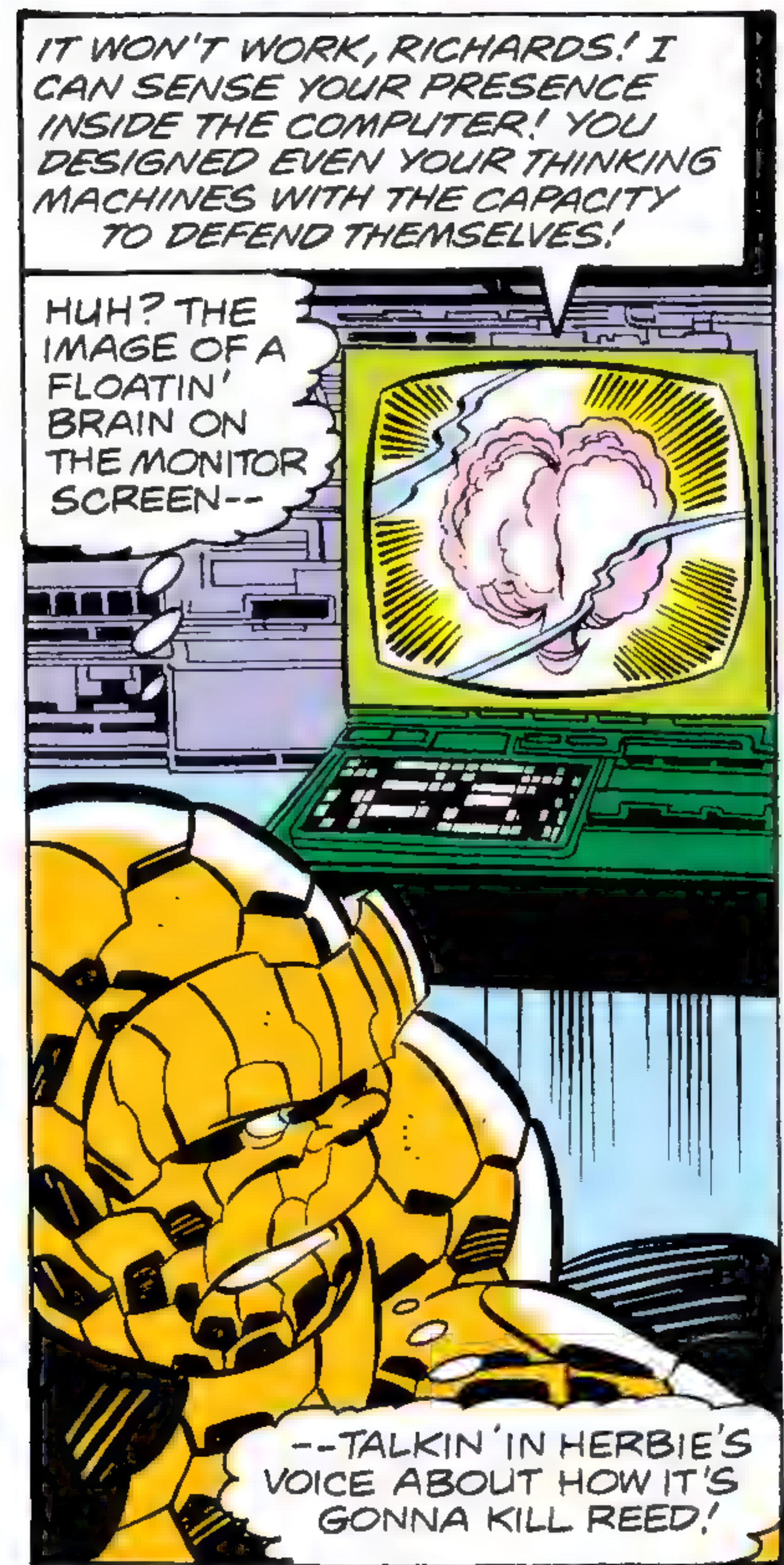
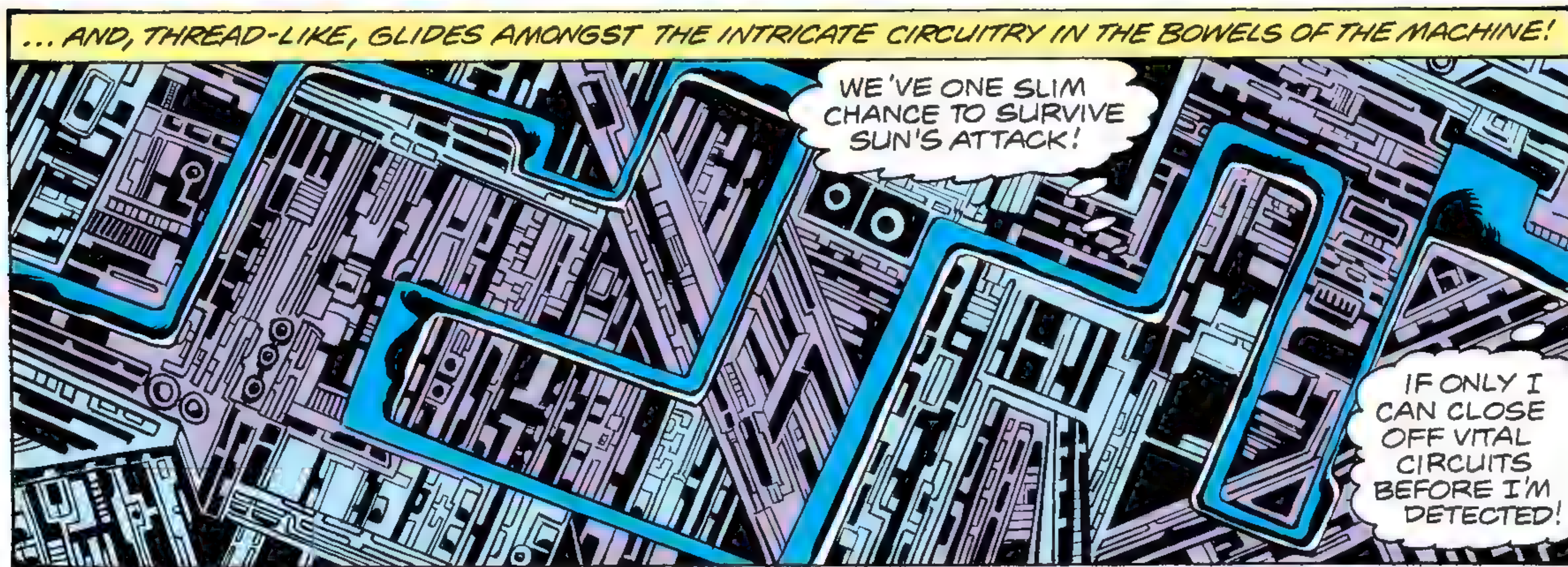
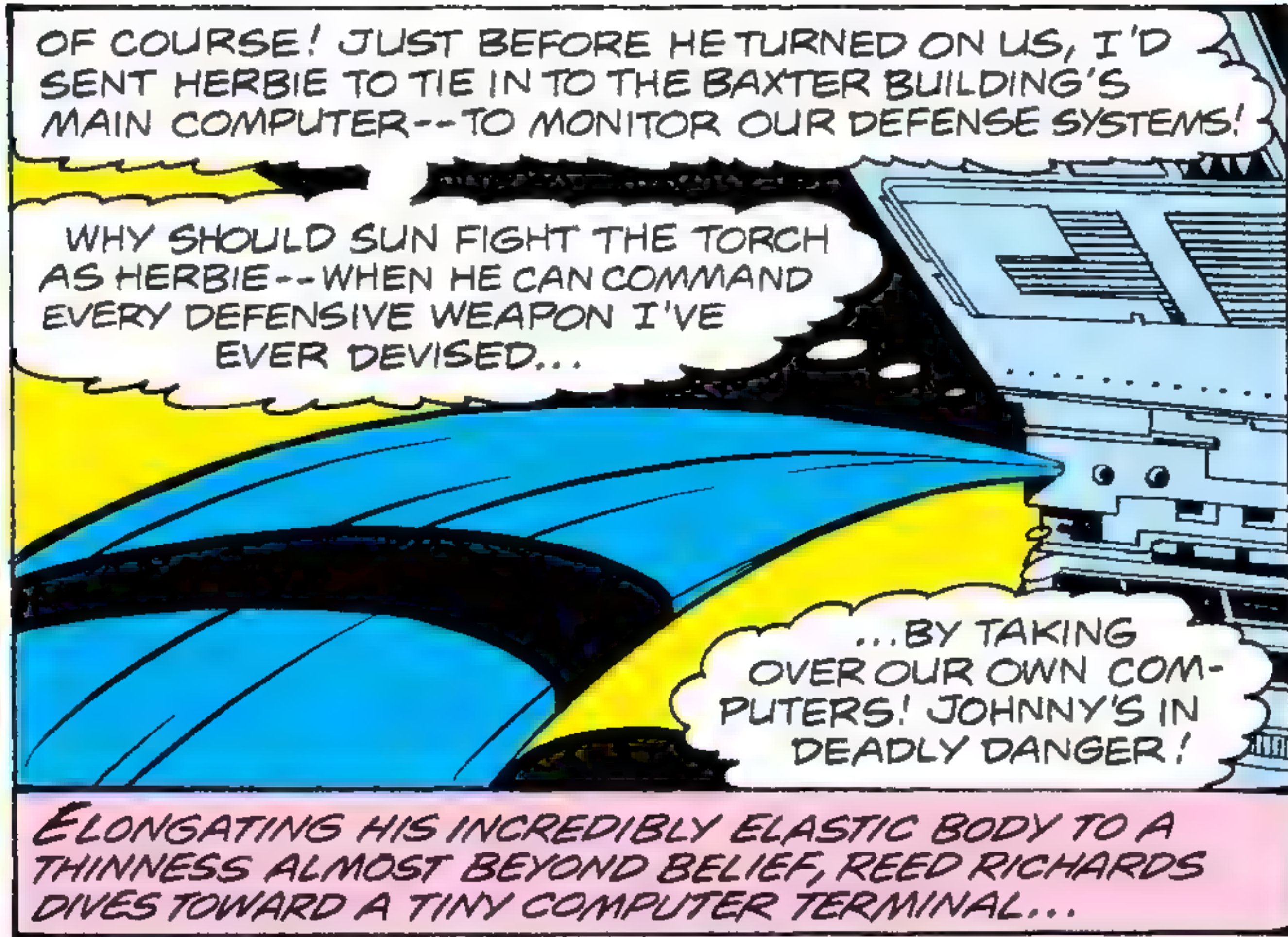
AND BEN! SUN SAID HE WAS
GOING TO GIVE HIM ANOTHER,
LETHAL JOLT-- YET HE'S LYING
HERE STUNNED, BUT ALIVE! CAN
JOHNNY HAVE ARRIVED AND
DEFEATED SUN WHILE WE LAY
HELPLESS?



NO! THERE'S SUN NOW,
WATCHING MY EVERY
MOVE!

KSSKSSSKSS
KSSSSSSSS.

EH? THAT SOUND! IT'S
COMPUTER CHATTER
THAT INDICATES HERBIE'S
IN HIS "REST" MODE!



MEANWHILE,
INSIDE THE
COMPUTER...

I'VE MANAGED
TO SEAL OFF
MOST OF THE
SYSTEMS TO
SUN'S CONTROL,
OVERRIDING
HIS COMMANDS!

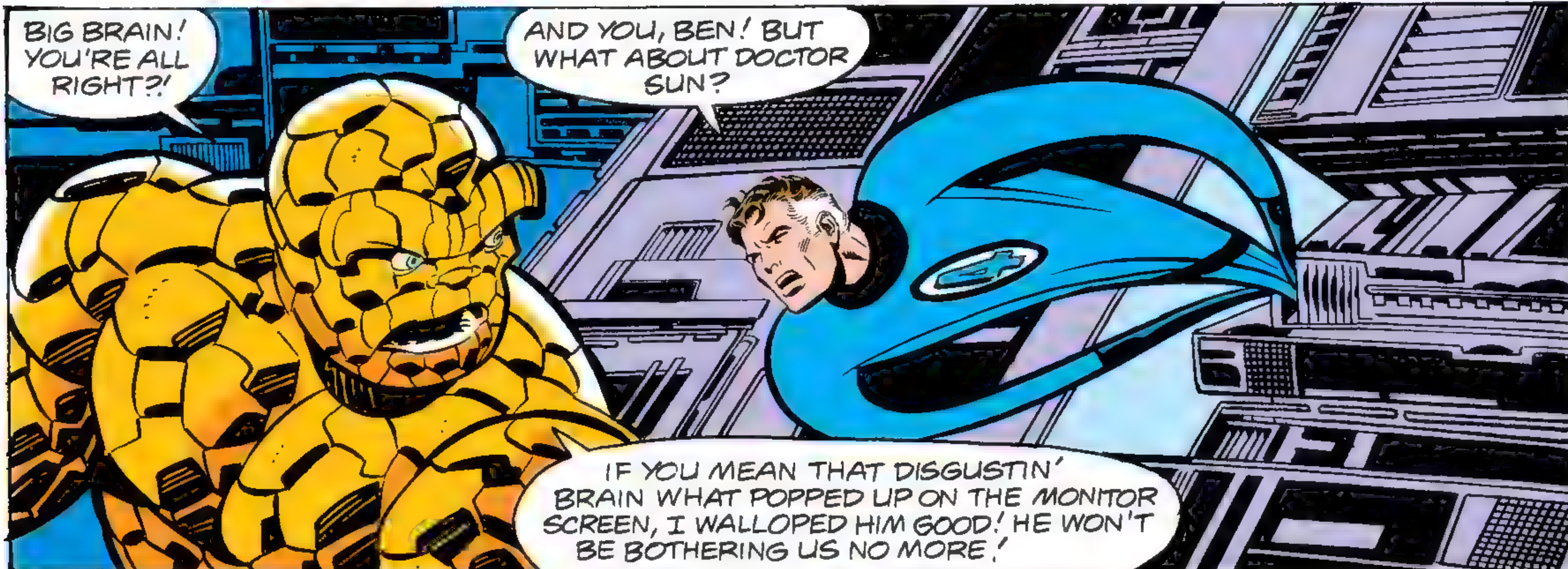


AND THE
RESULTS
SHOULD
BECOME
OBVIOUS
MOMENT-
ARILY!



BIG BRAIN!
YOU'RE ALL
RIGHT?!

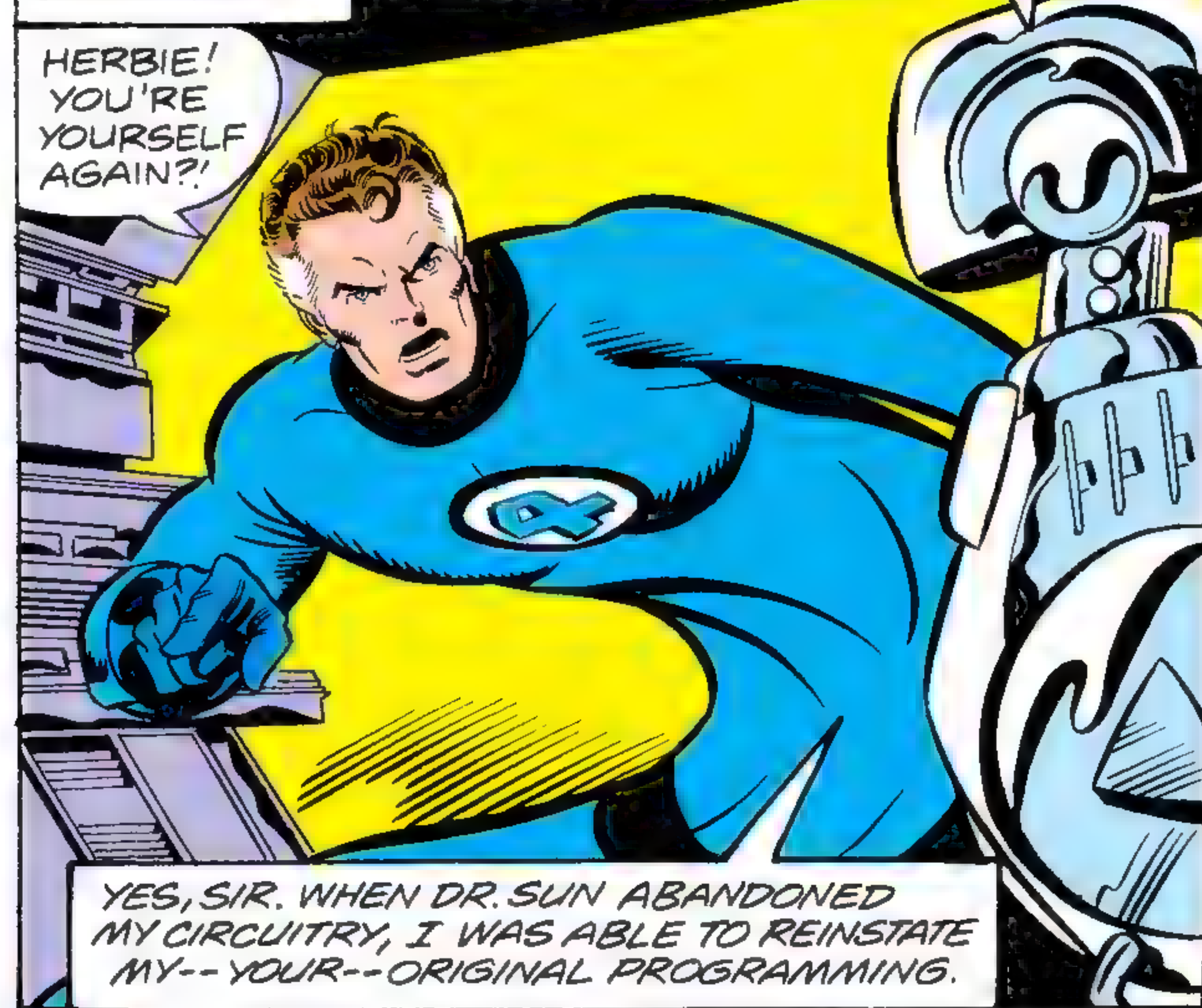
AND YOU, BEN! BUT
WHAT ABOUT DOCTOR
SUN?



IF YOU MEAN THAT DISGUSTIN'
BRAIN WHAT POPPED UP ON THE MONITOR
SCREEN, I WALLOPED HIM GOOD! HE WON'T
BE BOTHERING US NO MORE!

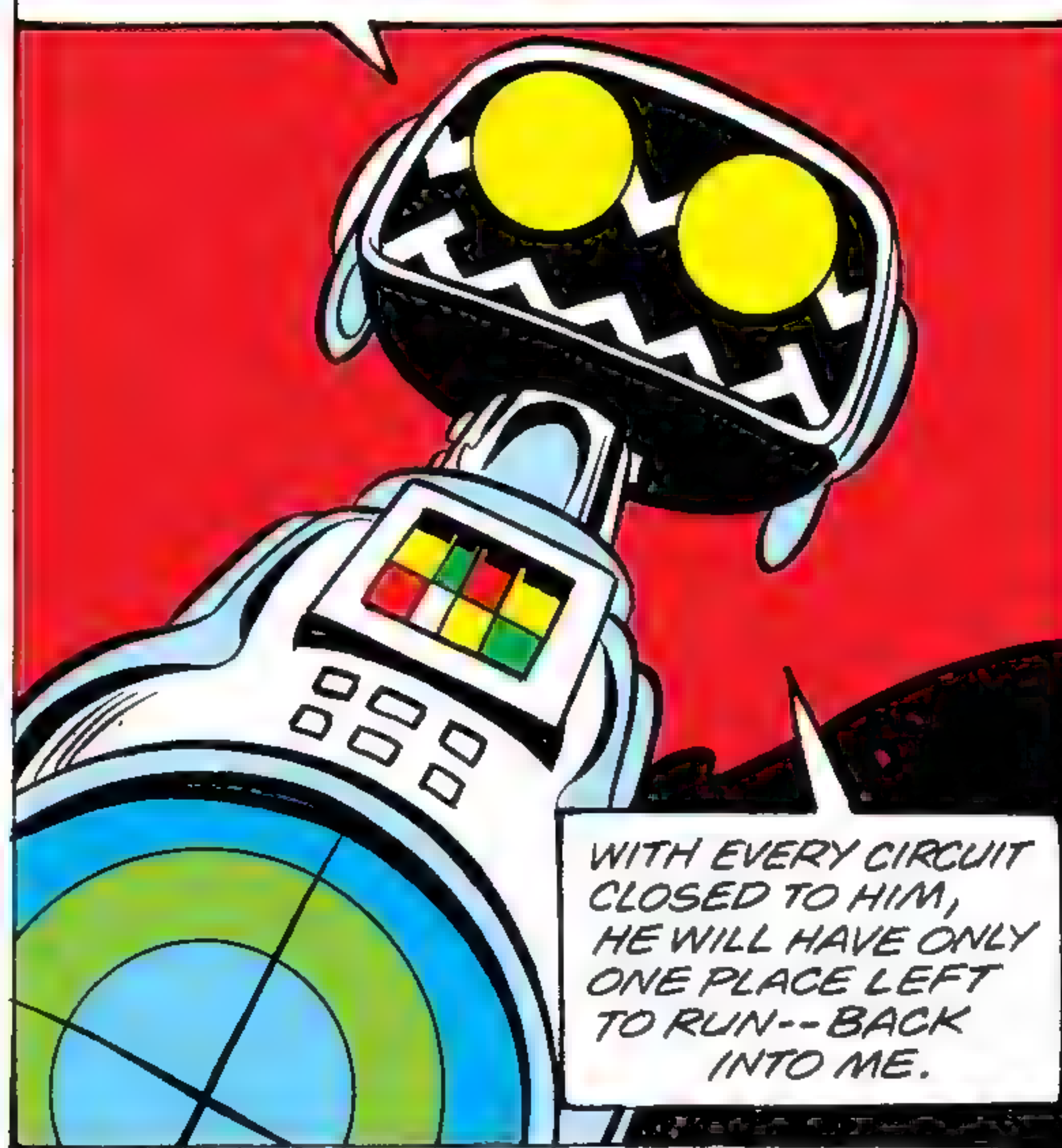
NEGATIVE, SIR. I'M AFRAID MR. GRIMM MERELY
DEMOLISHED THE MAIN MONITOR ON WHICH WE
COULD HAVE TRACED DOCTOR SUN THROUGH THE
COMPUTER.

HERBIE!
YOU'RE
YOURSELF
AGAIN?!

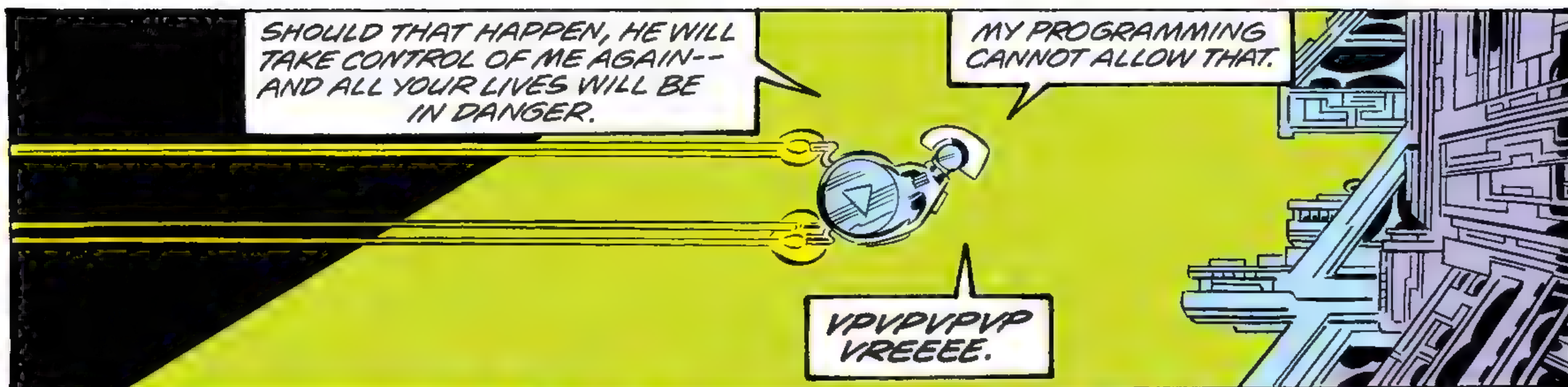


YES, SIR. WHEN DR. SUN ABANDONED
MY CIRCUITRY, I WAS ABLE TO REINSTATE
MY-- YOUR-- ORIGINAL PROGRAMMING.

BUT NOW, I FEAR, YOUR EFFORT TO TRAP
DR. SUN WITHIN THE MASTER COMPUTER
IS PROVING ONLY TOO SUCCESSFUL!



WITH EVERY CIRCUIT
CLOSED TO HIM,
HE WILL HAVE ONLY
ONE PLACE LEFT
TO RUN-- BACK
INTO ME.



SHOULD THAT HAPPEN, HE WILL TAKE CONTROL OF ME AGAIN-- AND ALL YOUR LIVES WILL BE IN DANGER.

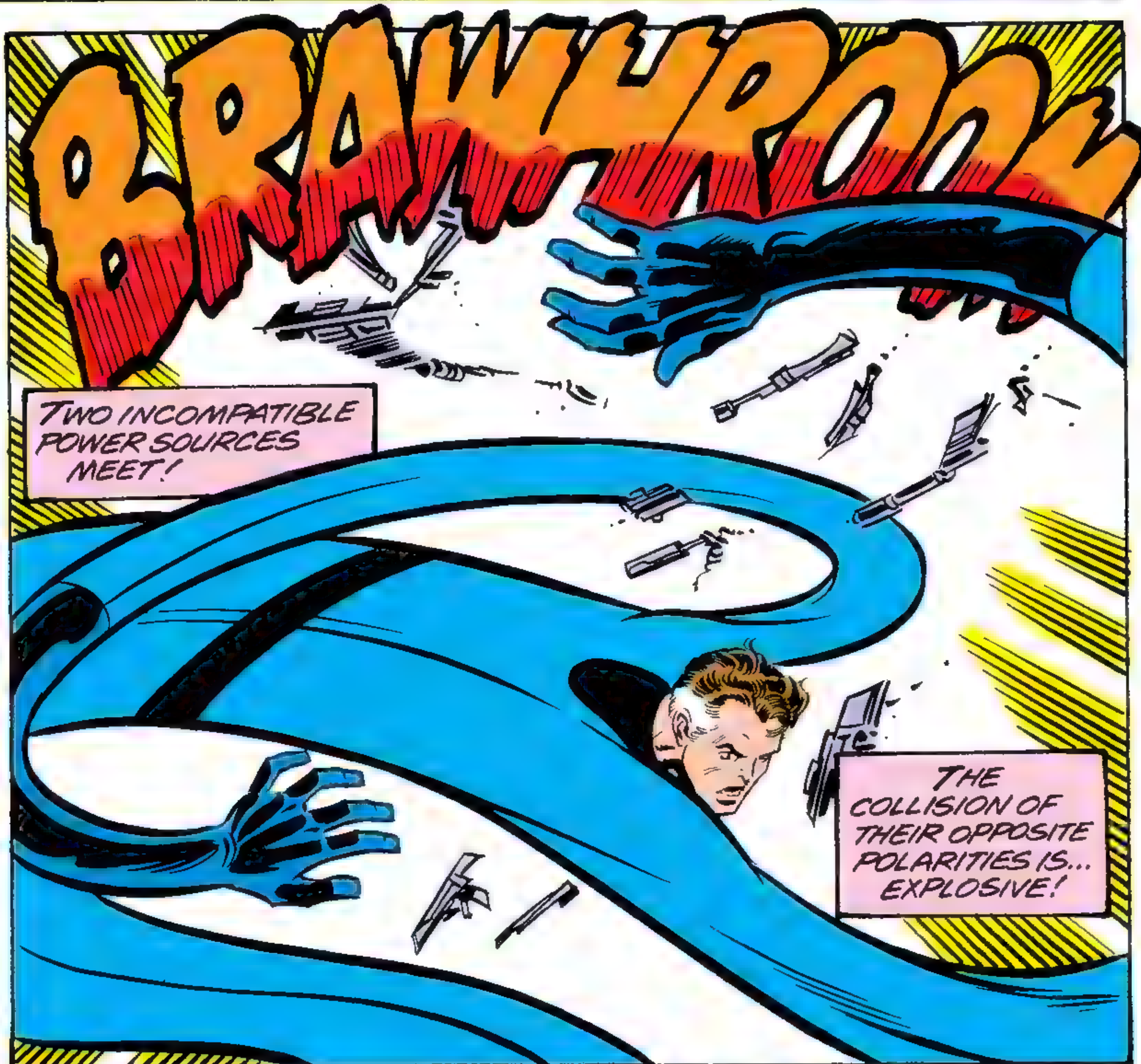
MY PROGRAMMING CANNOT ALLOW THAT.

VPVPVPVP
VREEEE.



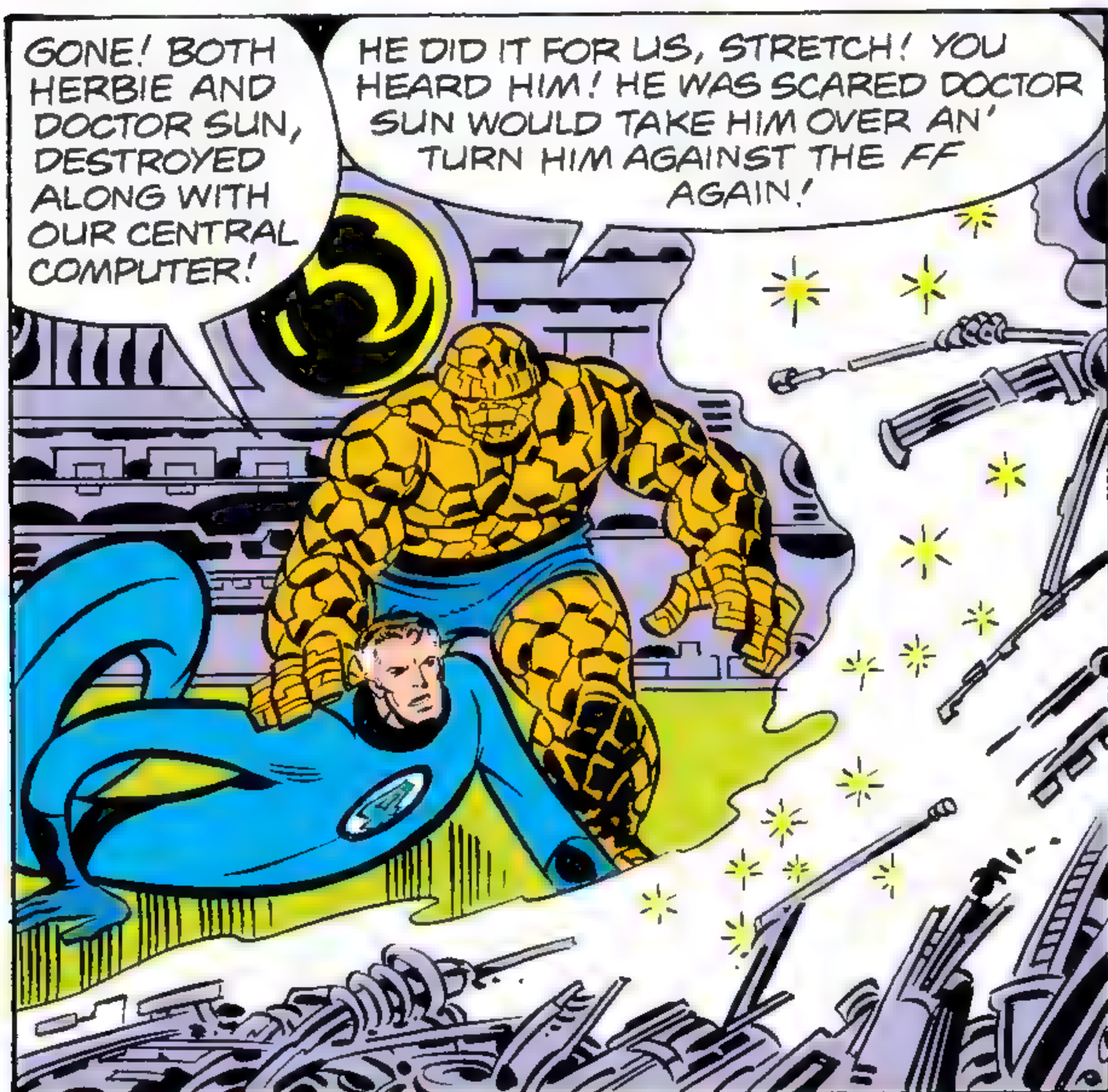
HERBIE, NO! YOU'RE ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH THE MAIN COMPUTER! I ARMED IT AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF DR. SUN'S RE-EMERGENCE!

HERBIE!



TWO INCOMPATIBLE POWER SOURCES MEET!

THE COLLISION OF THEIR OPPOSITE POLARITIES IS... EXPLOSIVE!



GONE! BOTH HERBIE AND DOCTOR SUN, DESTROYED ALONG WITH OUR CENTRAL COMPUTER!

HE DID IT FOR US, STRETCH! YOU HEARD HIM! HE WAS SCARED DOCTOR SUN WOULD TAKE HIM OVER AN' TURN HIM AGAINST THE FF AGAIN!



BEN, YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT HERBIE AS IF HE HAD HUMAN EMOTIONS. HE DIDN'T. HE WAS JUST A MACHINE-- NOT PROGRAMMED FOR INDEPENDENT ACTION.

MEBBE YA BUILT HIM BETTER THAN YA KNEW, REED! I THINK HERBIE SACRIFICED HIMSELF TO SAVE US.

I-I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT THE LITTLE SQUIRT WAS ALL RIGHT IN THE END.

NEXT ISSUE: WHEN A SPIDER-MAN COMES CALLING...

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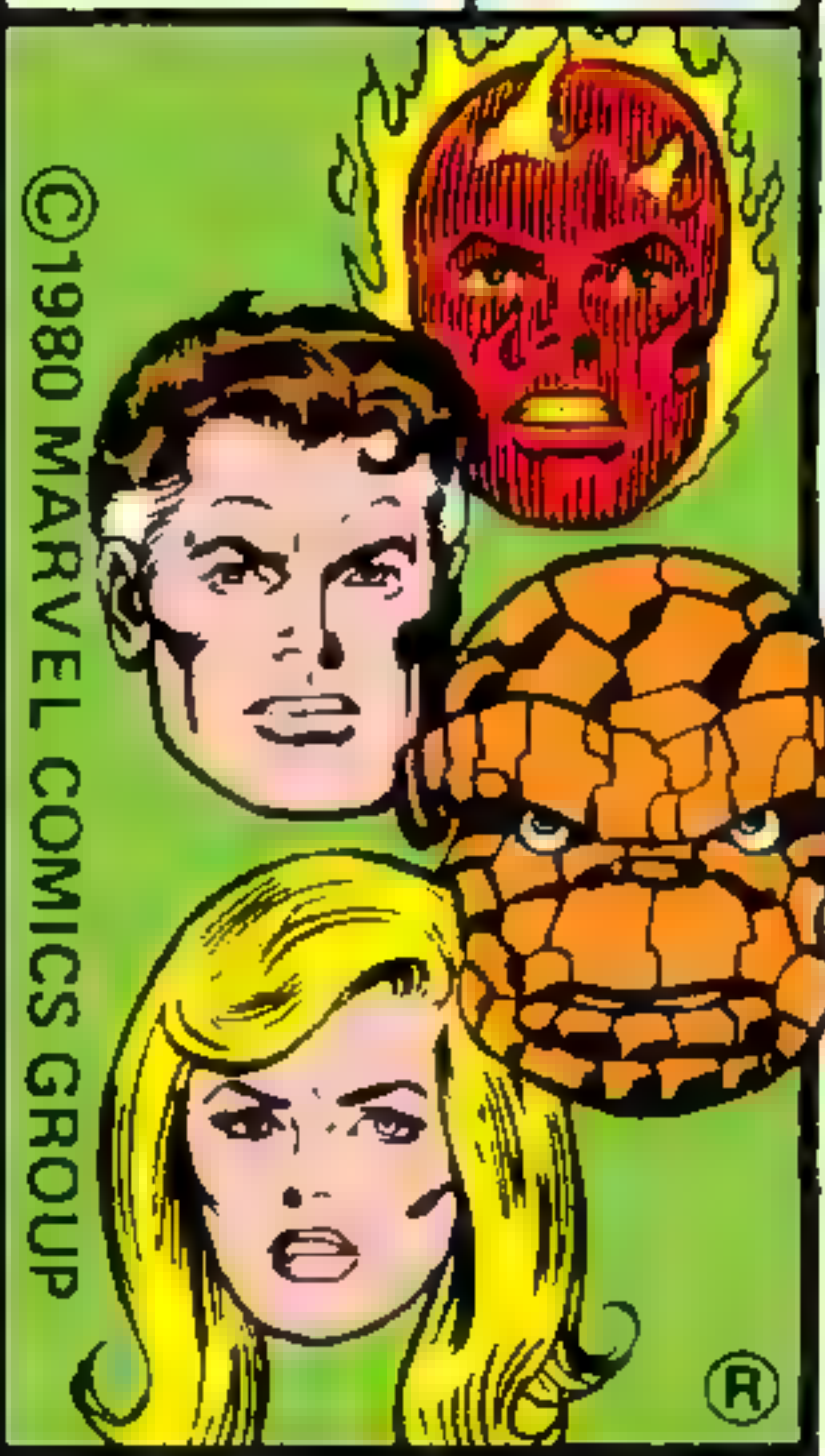
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Fantastic Four®

THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR HAVE SIGNED UP
2 NEW MEMBERS - ELECTRO AND
SPIDER-MAN!

IT'S THE
BATTLE ROYAL
WITH THE
FRIGHTFUL
FOUR!



MILGROM/SINNOT

Reed Richards! Ben Grimm! Sue Richards! Johnny Storm! Together they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were changed into something more than human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! And now the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

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ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

JIM NOVAK, LETTERER
BEN SEAN, COLORIST

JIM SALICRUP
EDITORIAL TENANT

JIM SHOOTER
SUPERINTENDENT

IMPORTANT NOTE:

THIS ISSUE IS THE CATAclysmic CONCLUSION TO THE TALE BEGUN IN PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #42, WHICH YOU CAN CATCH ON SALE NOW!

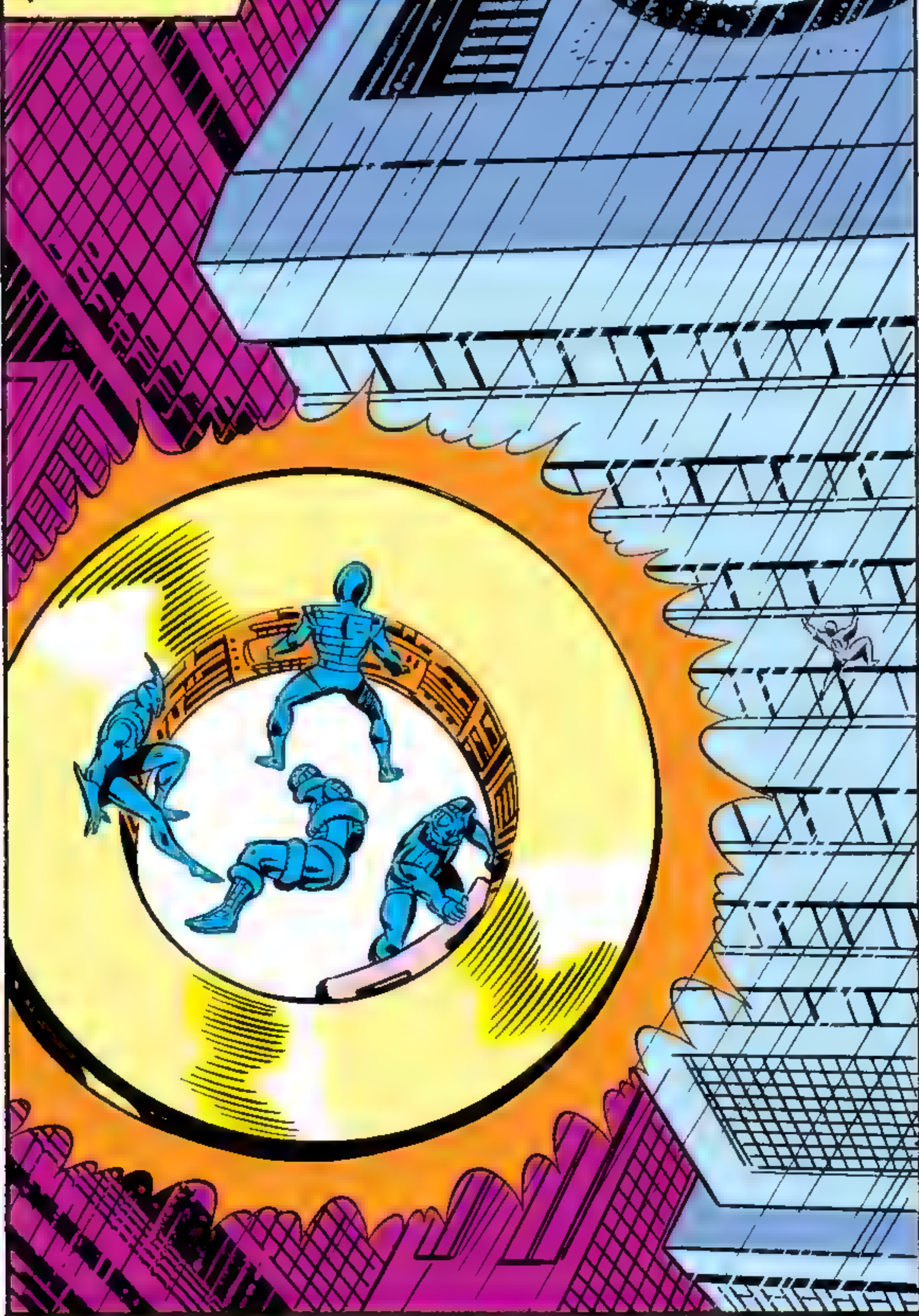
THE STORM HAS LASHED MANHATTAN WITH ITS FURY FOR HOURS. IT IS NOT A NIGHT FOR VISITING.

NONETHELESS, THE FAMOUS OCCUPANTS OF THE BAXTER BUILDING ARE ABOUT TO RECEIVE A GUEST!

THIRTY-THREE FLOORS! I'M ALMOST TO THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S LIVING QUARTERS!

WHEN A
SPIDER-MAN
COMES
CALLING!

AS THE FAMILIAR FIGURE IN THE COLORFUL COSTUME CONTINUES HIS CLIMB UP THE SIDE OF FF HEAD-QUARTERS --



-- HIS PAINSTAKING PROGRESS IS OBSERVED BY A TERRIBLE TRIO IN AN AMAZING ANTIGRAVITY CRAFT SOUNDLESSLY HOVERING ABOVE!

HE'S MOVIN' AROUND TO THE SIDE, TRYIN' TO FIND THE RIGHT WINDOW!

NOT POSSESSING A SCHEMATIC LAYOUT OF FANTASTIC FOUR HEADQUARTERS, HE WILL HAVE TO RELY ON A VISUAL SIGHTING!



HOPEFULLY BEFORE HIS PRESENCE IS DETECTED--

-- BY REED RICHARDS' ALARM SYSTEMS! I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY HAVEN'T REACTED TO ME YET!

NOT THAT I'M COMPLAINING! THE LONGER I CAN GO UNDETECTED--



-- THE LESS CHANCE ANY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR WILL HAVE OF SEEING THROUGH MY BLUFF!

AND ABOARD THE HOVERCAR OF THE RECENTLY REUNITED FRIGHTFUL FOUR...

THE TRAPSTER'S ALMOST AS GOOD AT SCALIN' WALLS AS YOU ARE, PUNK! 'COURSE, YOU DO IT NATURALLY, WHILE HE'S GOTTA USE SUCTION-GRIPS...

BUT CHANCES ARE THE FF AIN'T GONNA NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE -- NOT 'TIL IT'S TOO LATE!



MMMM-FFF!

IS THE WEB-SLINGER TRYING TO TALK BACK TO YOU, SAND-MAN?

SOUNDS LIKE IT, ELECTRO!



LET'S HEAR HIM WISE-OFF WITH A FISTFUL OF SAND IN HIS FACE!

SANDMAN'S TRANSFORMED ARM SMASHES AT SPIDER-MAN WITH THE IMPACT OF A SAND-BLASTER...

SENDING HIM REELING INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS EVEN AS HIS FADING MEMORY HANGS ONTO IMAGES FROM EARLIER THIS EVENING...



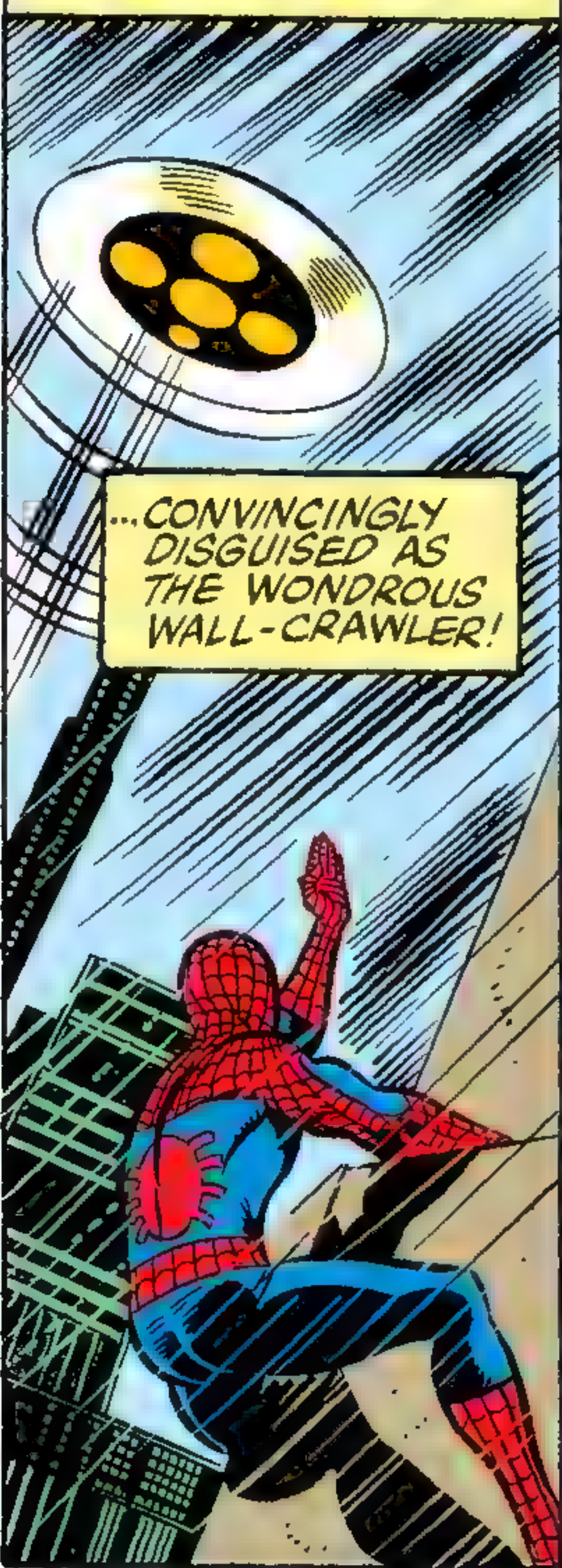
WHEN HE'D LEFT HIS COLLEGE CLASS DURING AN EVENING CRUISE TO HEED A FLAMING MESSAGE URGENTLY ASKING HIM TO MEET THE HUMAN TORCH ATOP THE STATUE OF LIBERTY--

--ONLY TO FIND HE'D BEEN LURED INTO A TRAP BY ELECTRO, POSING AS THE HUMAN TORCH, AND ELECTRO'S NEW COMRADES IN CRIME... THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR!



NOW, WITH HIM SAFELY UNDER GUARD AND UNABLE TO SOUND A WARNING, THE EVIL FF ARE COUNTING ON SPIDER-MAN'S FRIENDSHIP WITH THE TORCH--

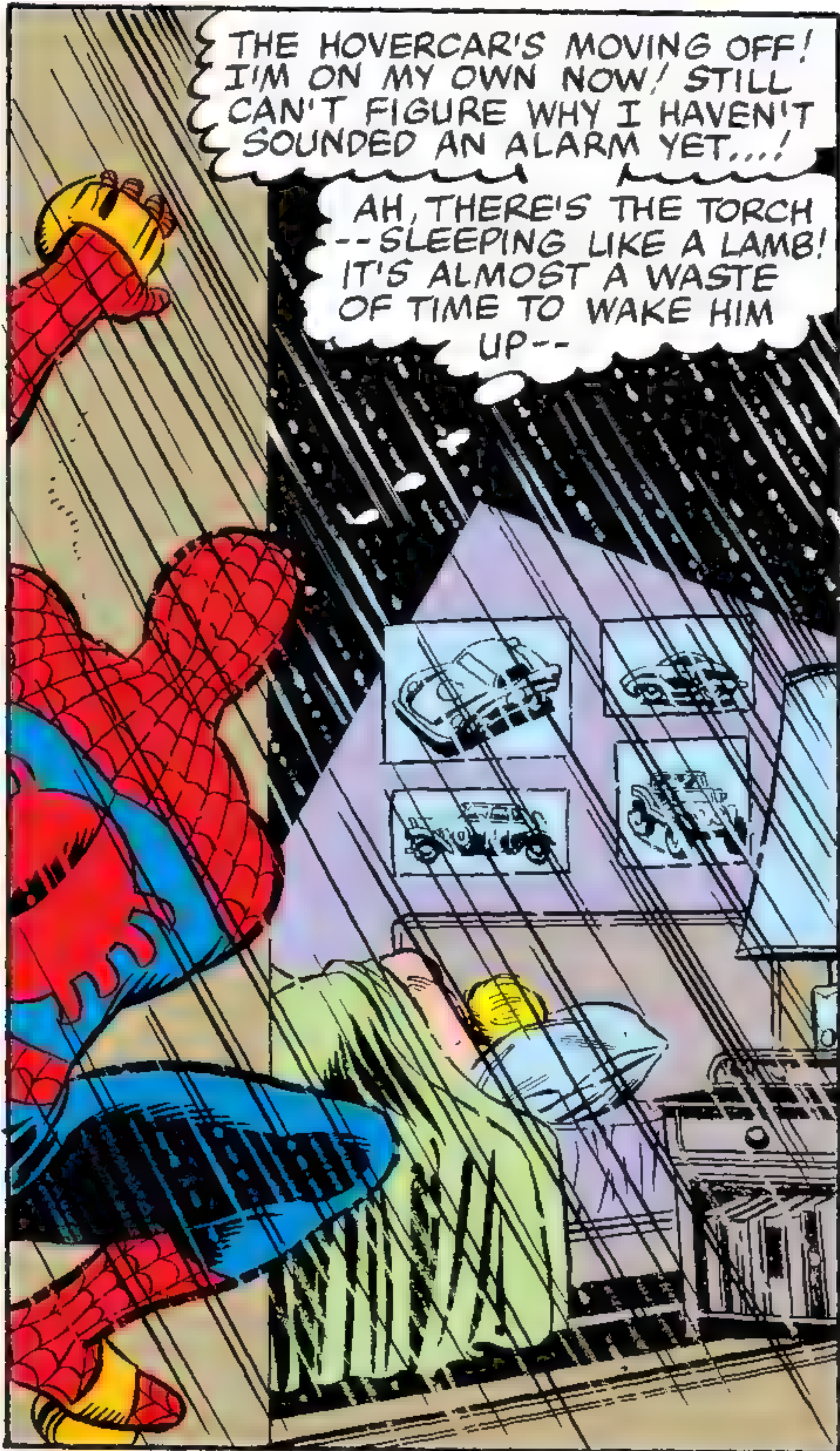
--TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE BAXTER BUILDING VIA THE TRAPSTER...



...CONVINCINGLY DISGUISED AS THE WONDROUS WALL-CRAWLER!

THE HOVERCAR'S MOVING OFF! I'M ON MY OWN NOW! STILL CAN'T FIGURE WHY I HAVEN'T SOUNDED AN ALARM YET...!

AH, THERE'S THE TORCH -- SLEEPING LIKE A LAMB! IT'S ALMOST A WASTE OF TIME TO WAKE HIM UP--



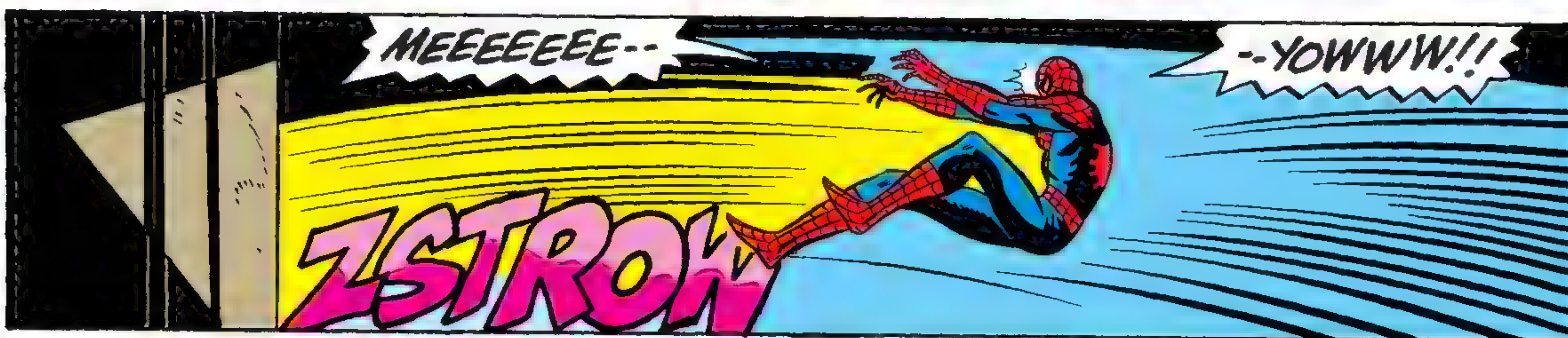
--WHEN OUR PLAN CALLS FOR PUTTING HIM RIGHT BACK TO SLEEP... PERMANENTLY!



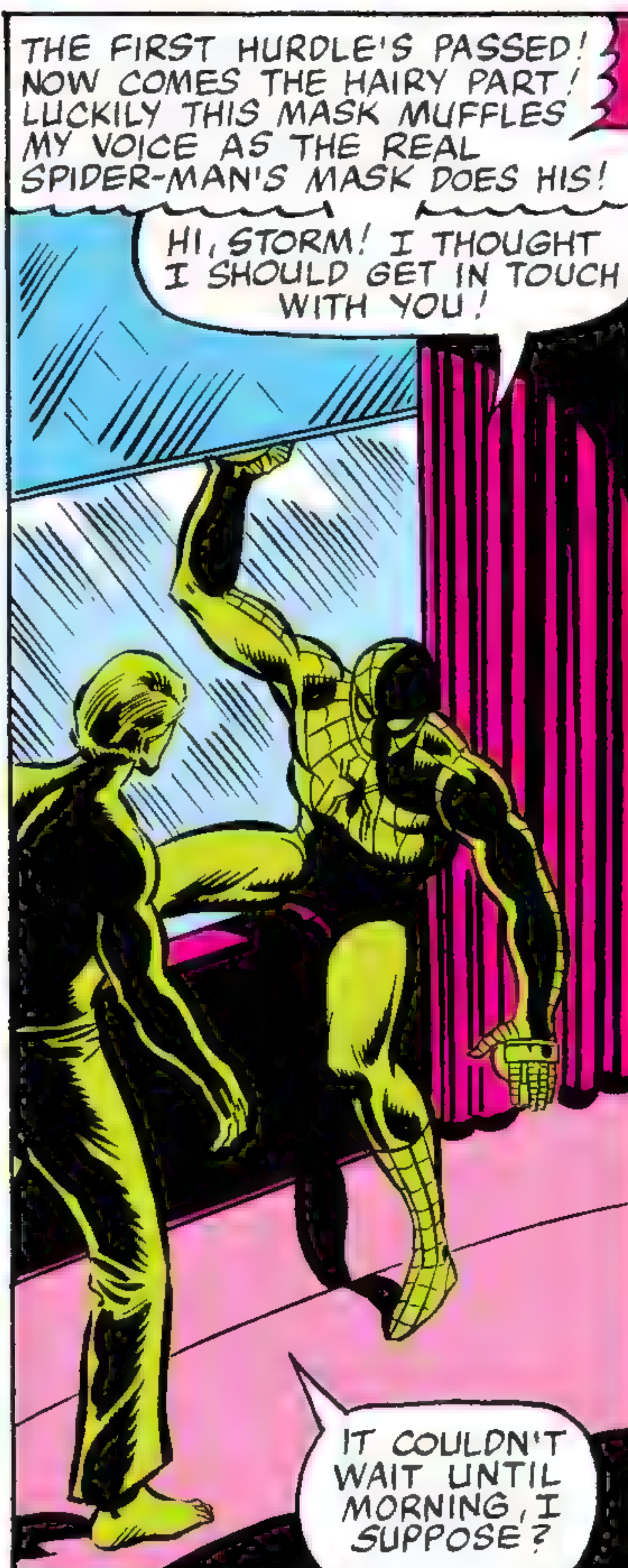
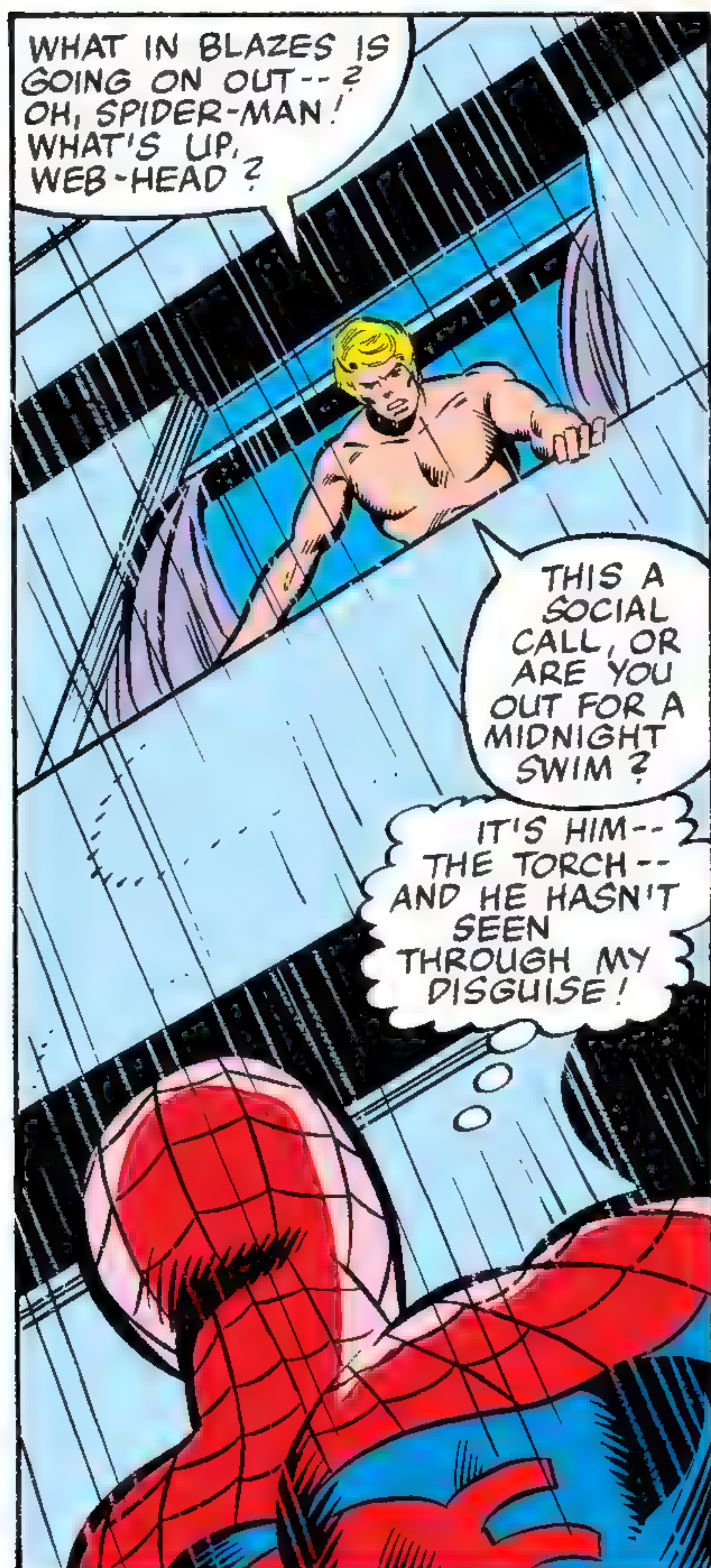
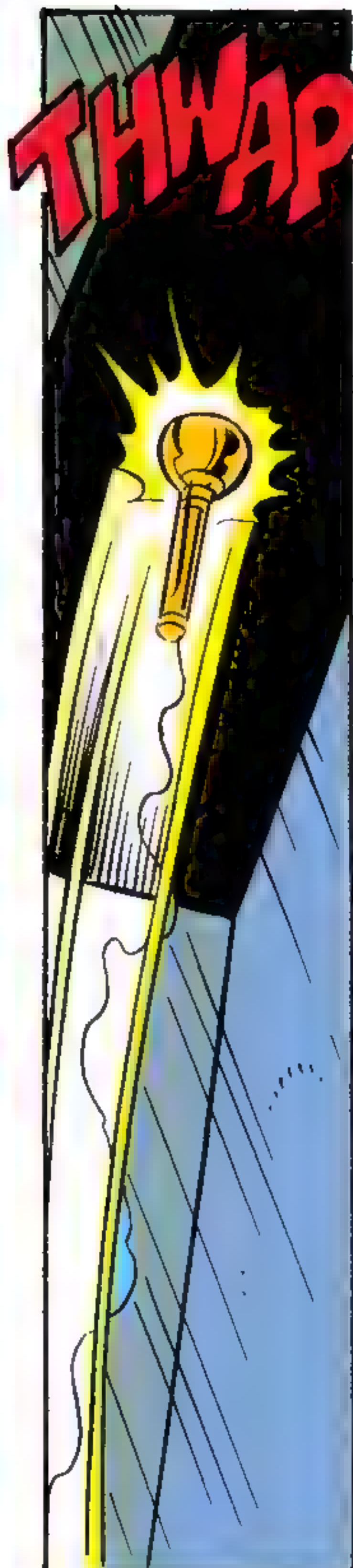
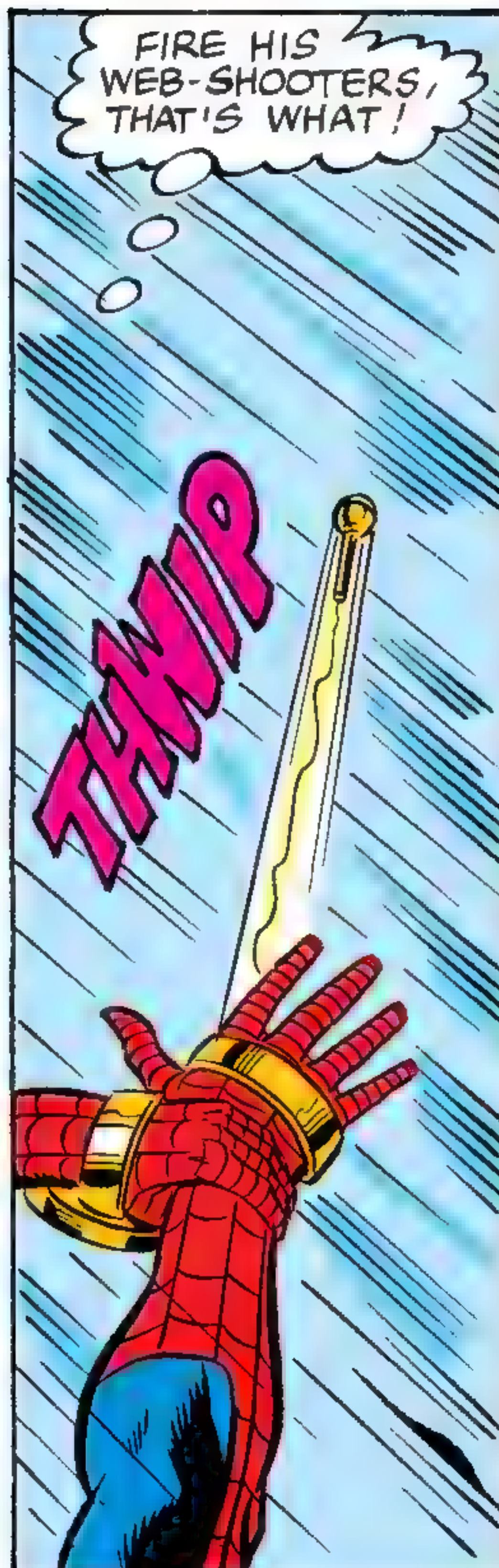
MAYBE I SHOULD TAP LOUDER? HE DOESN'T SEEM TO HEAR...

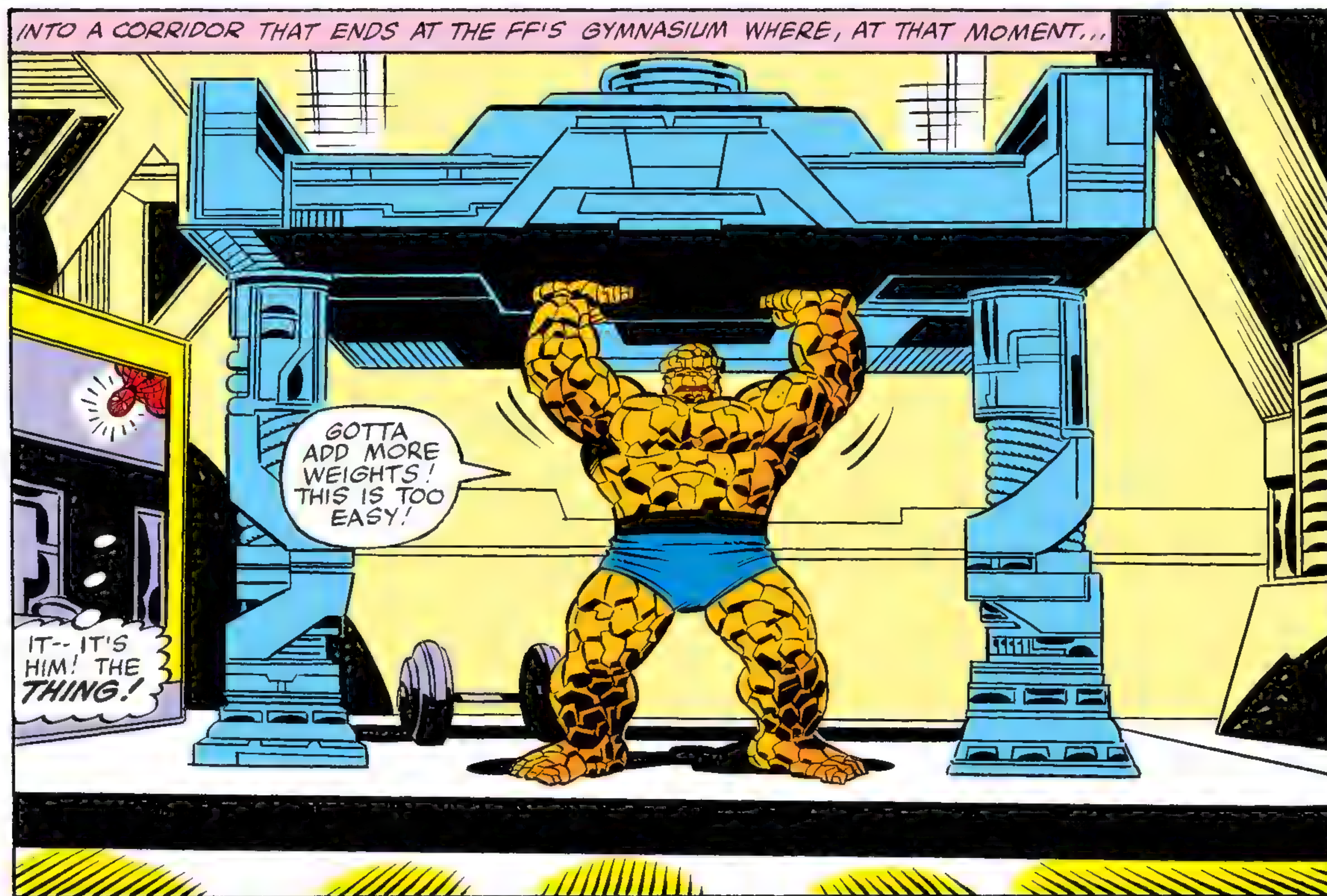
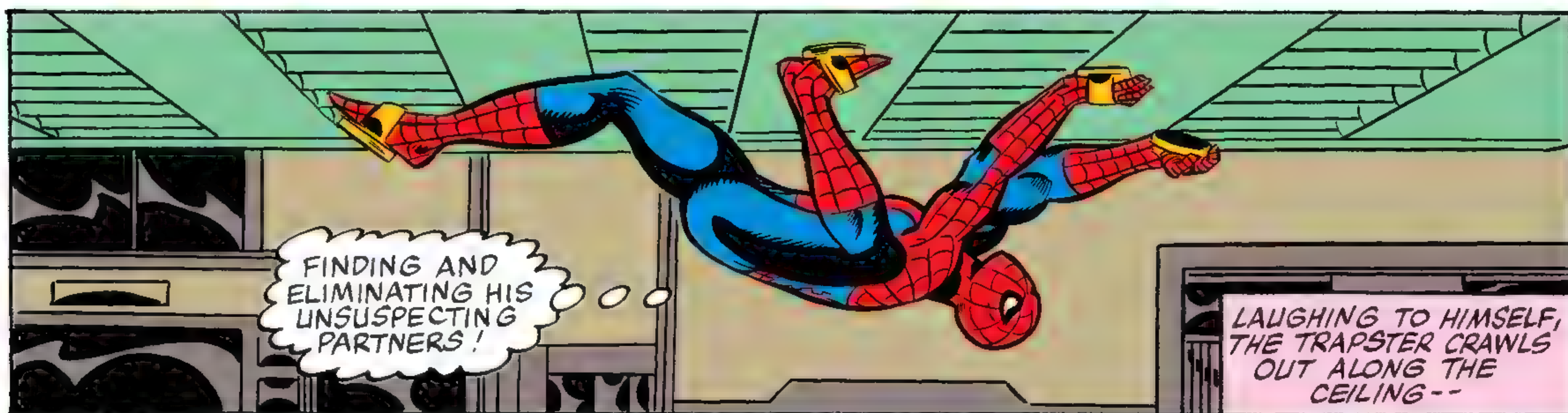
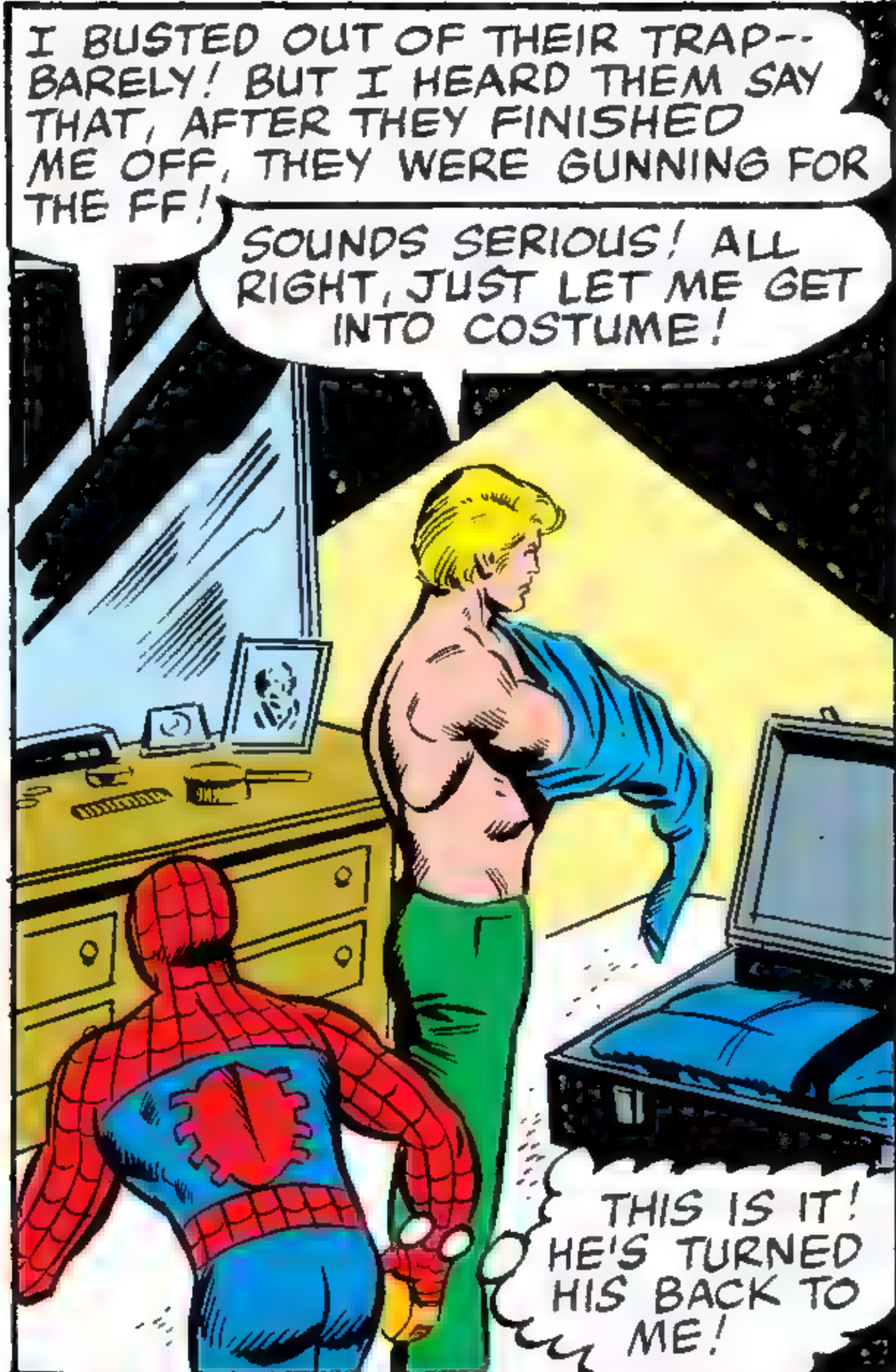
MEEEEEEEE--

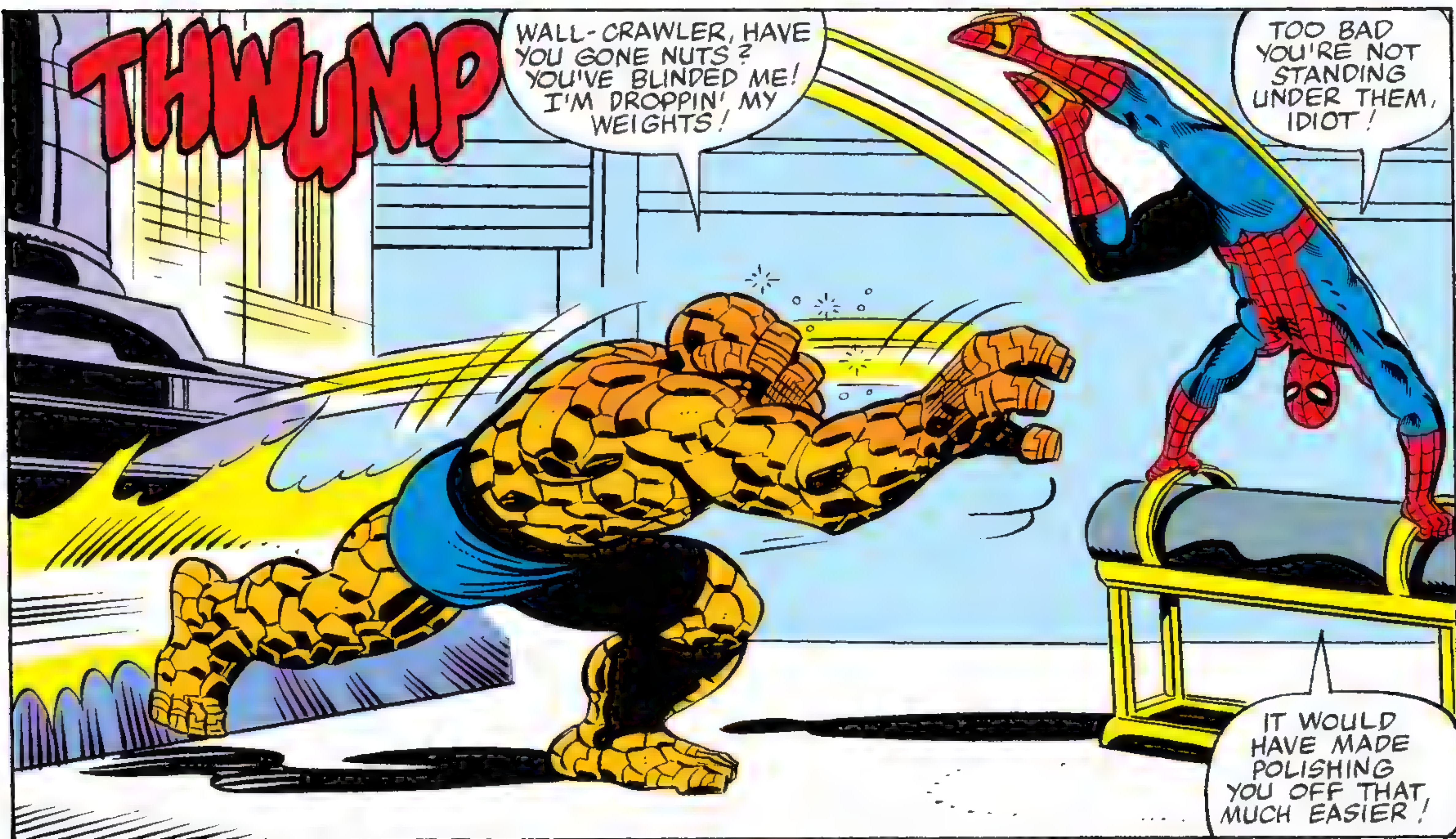
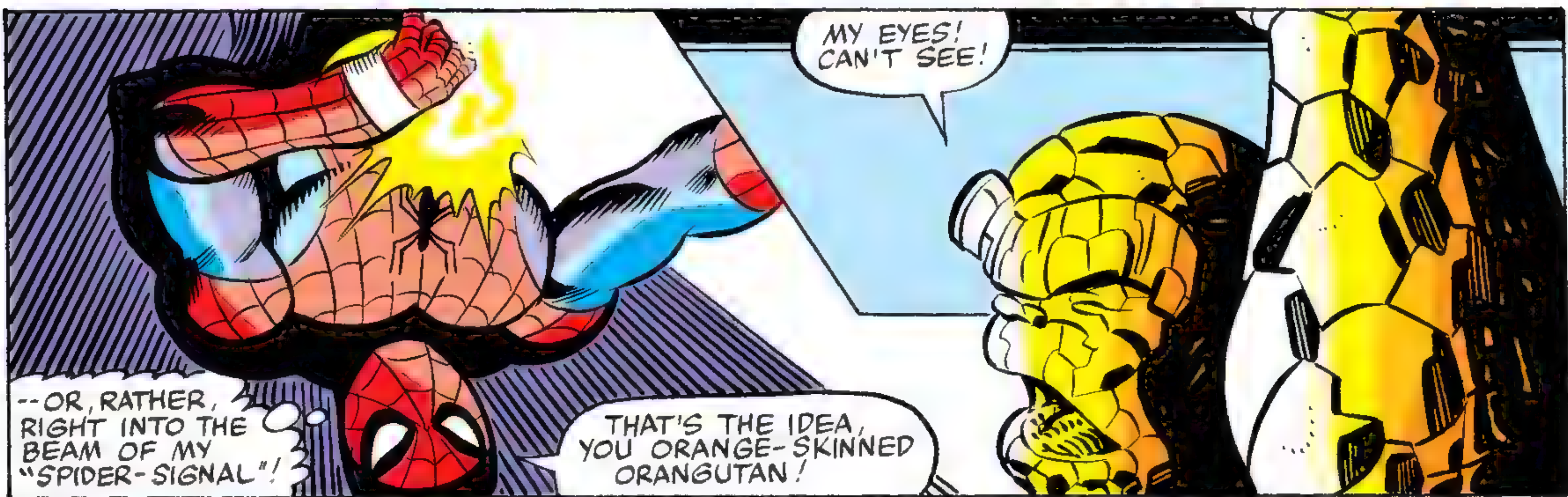
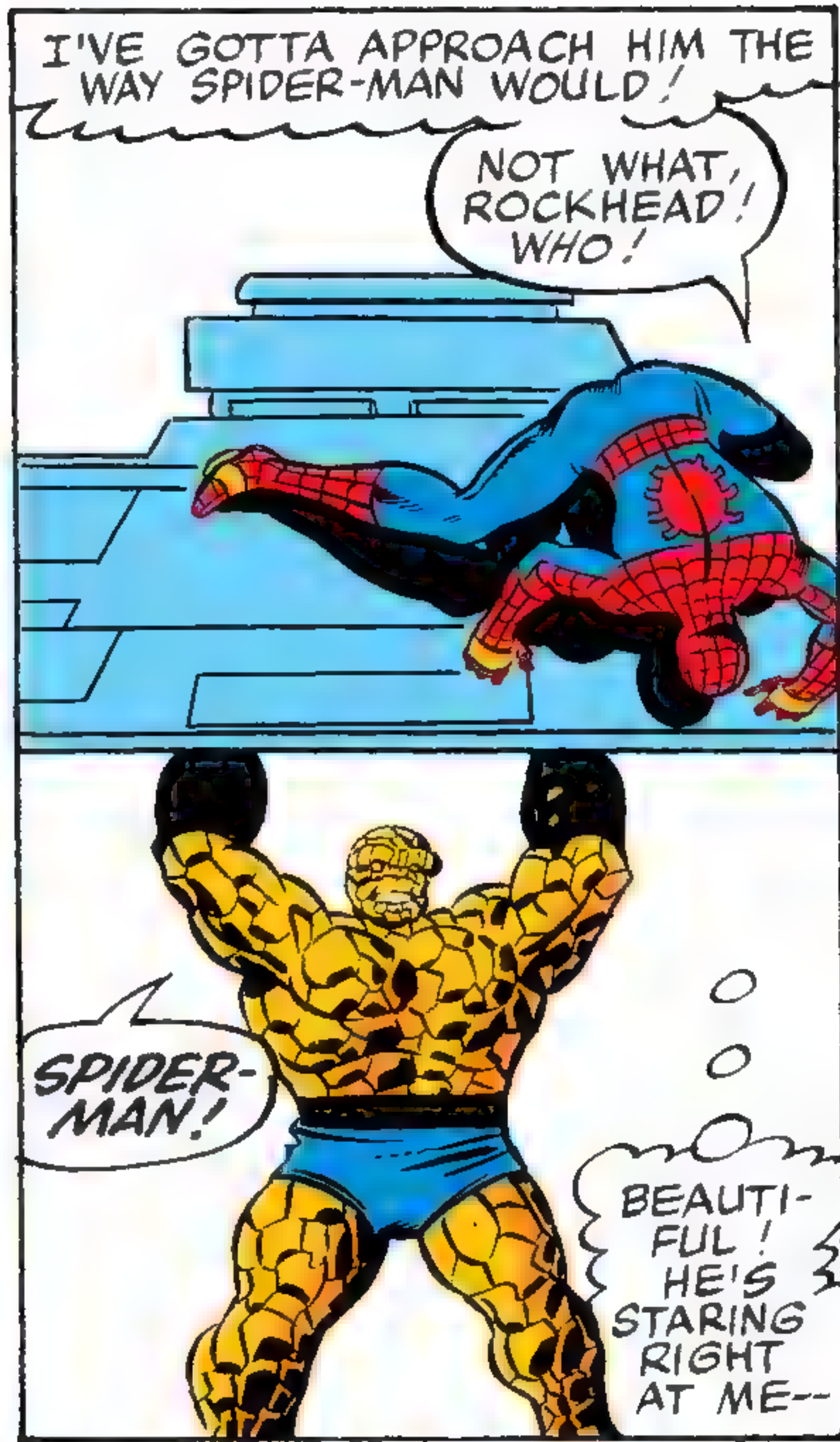
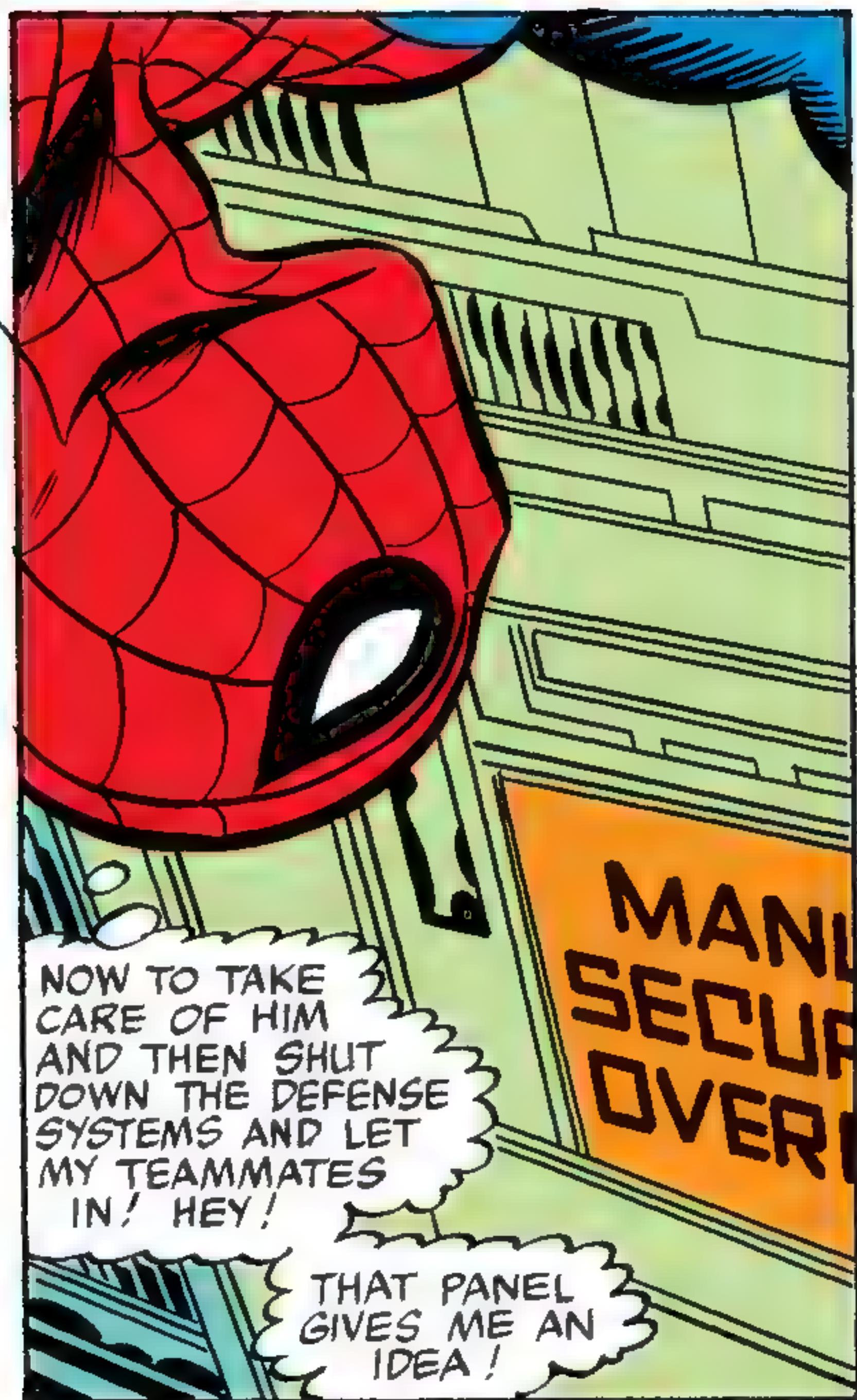
--YOWWW!!

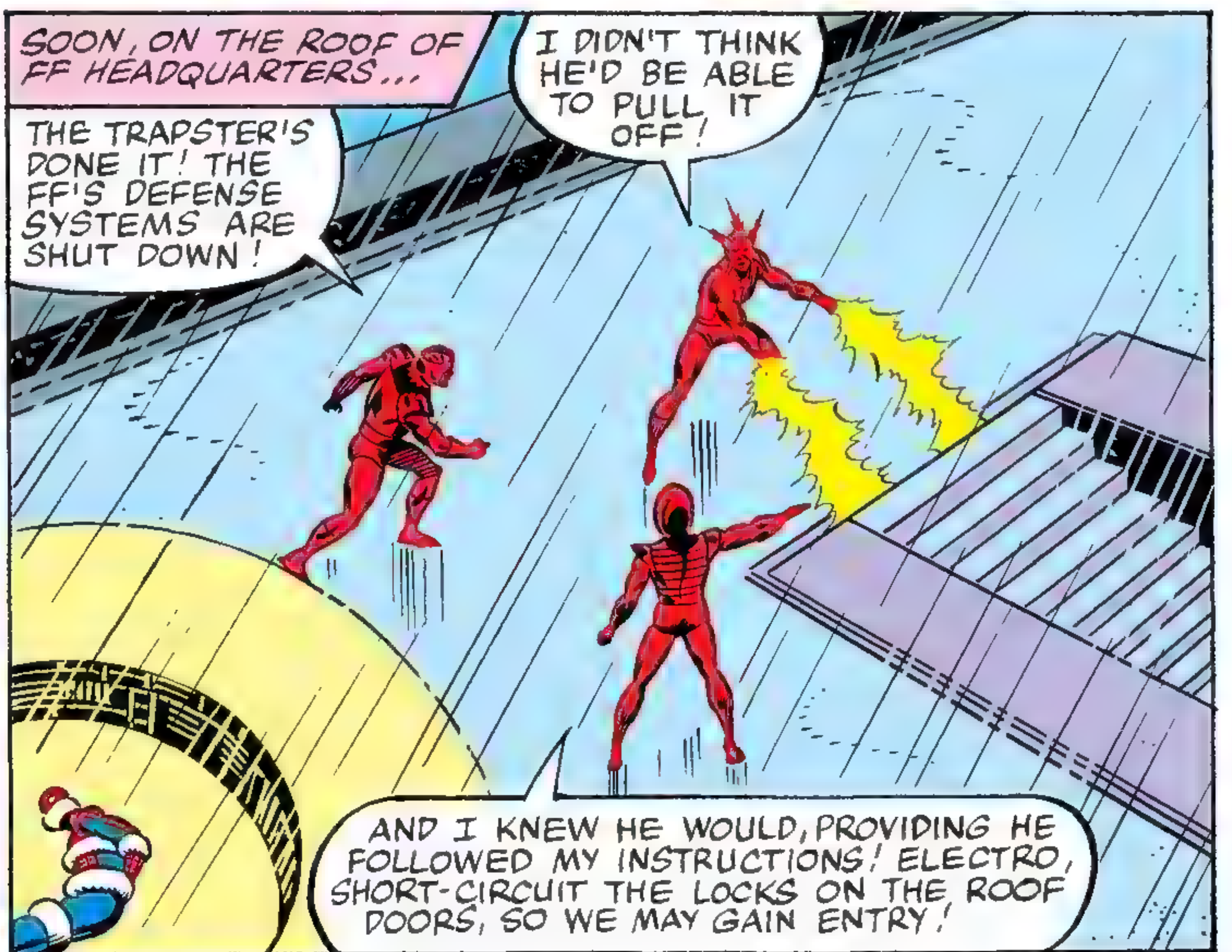
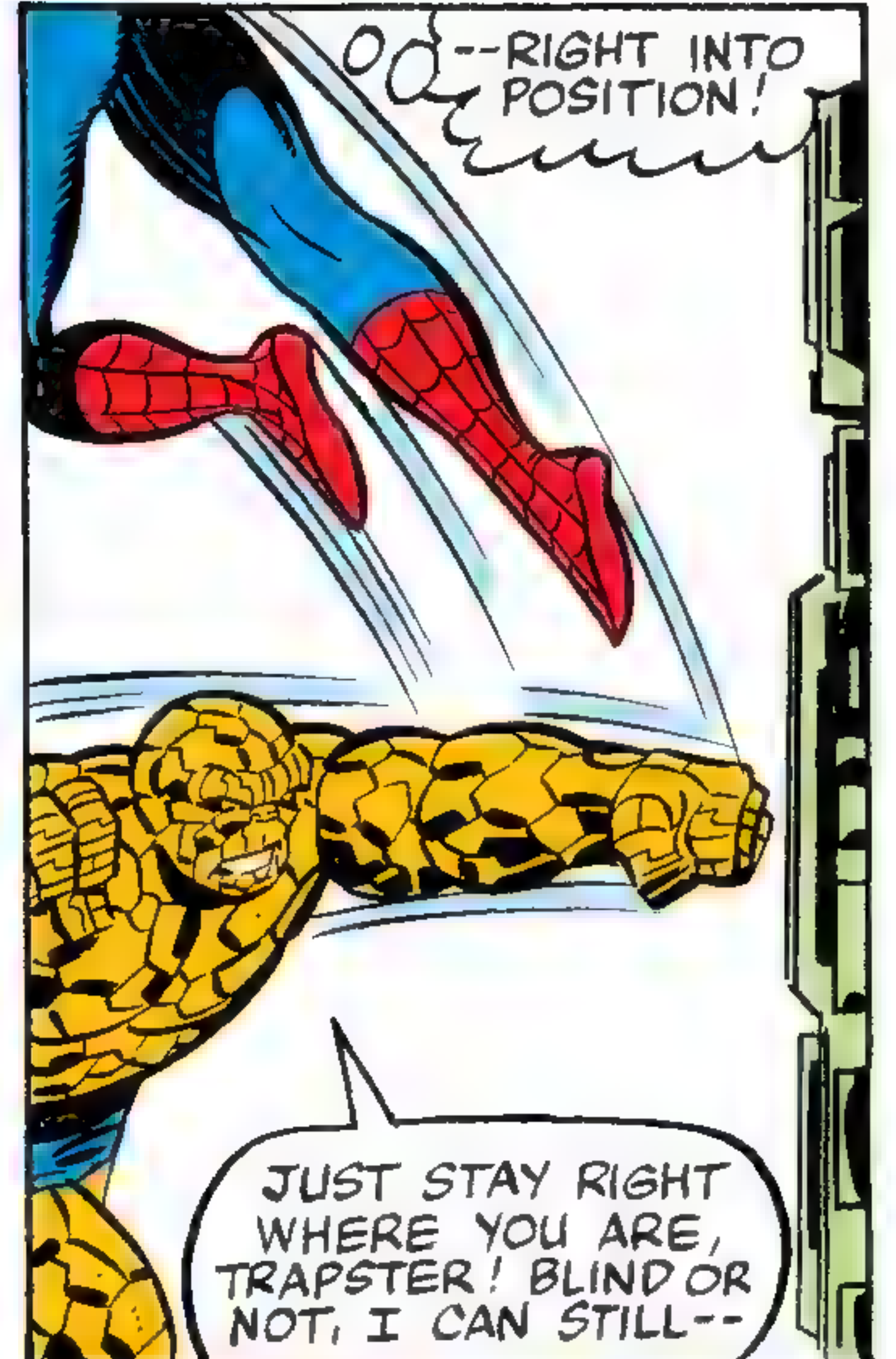


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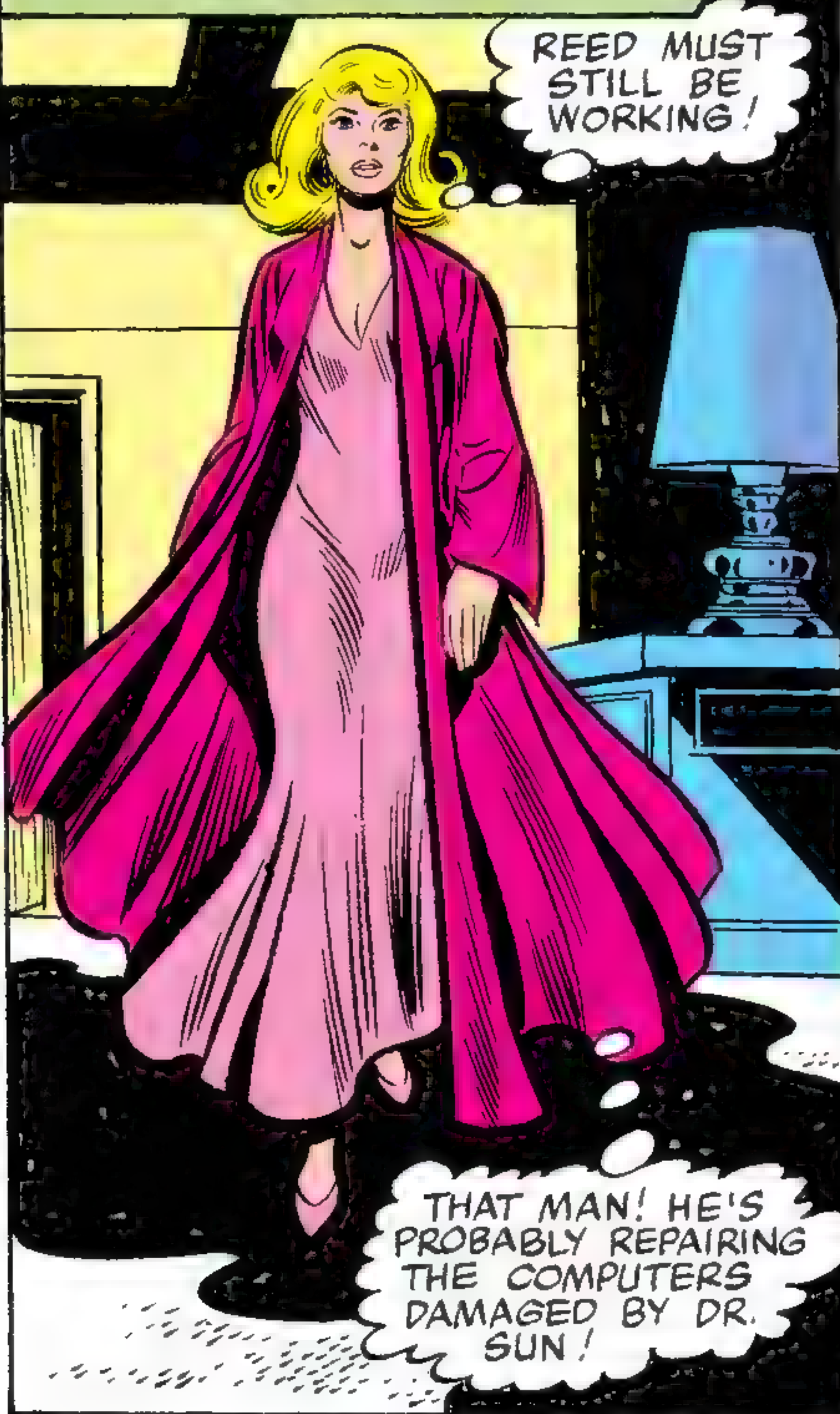




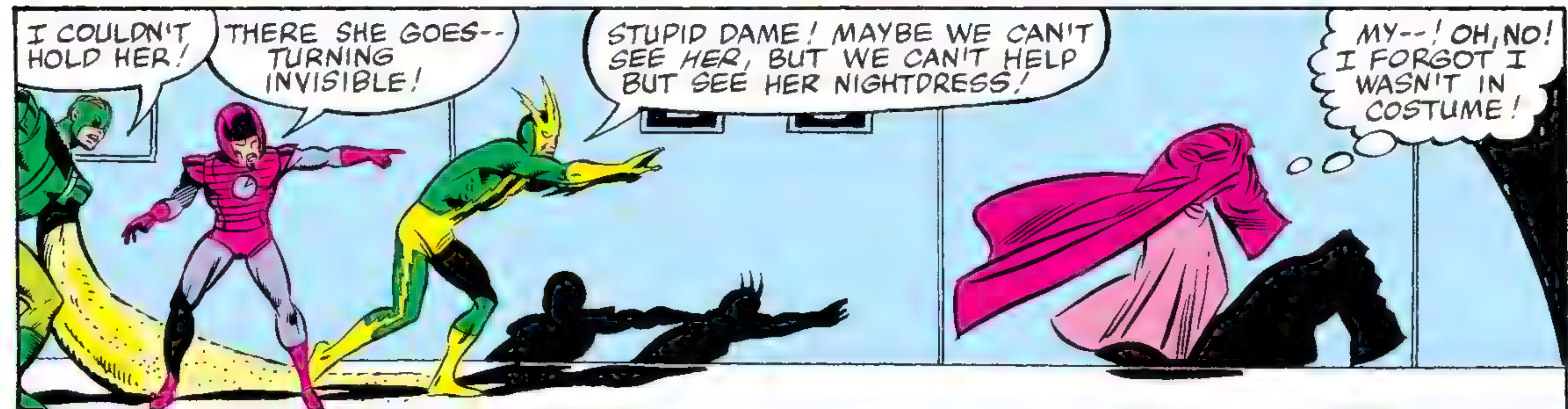
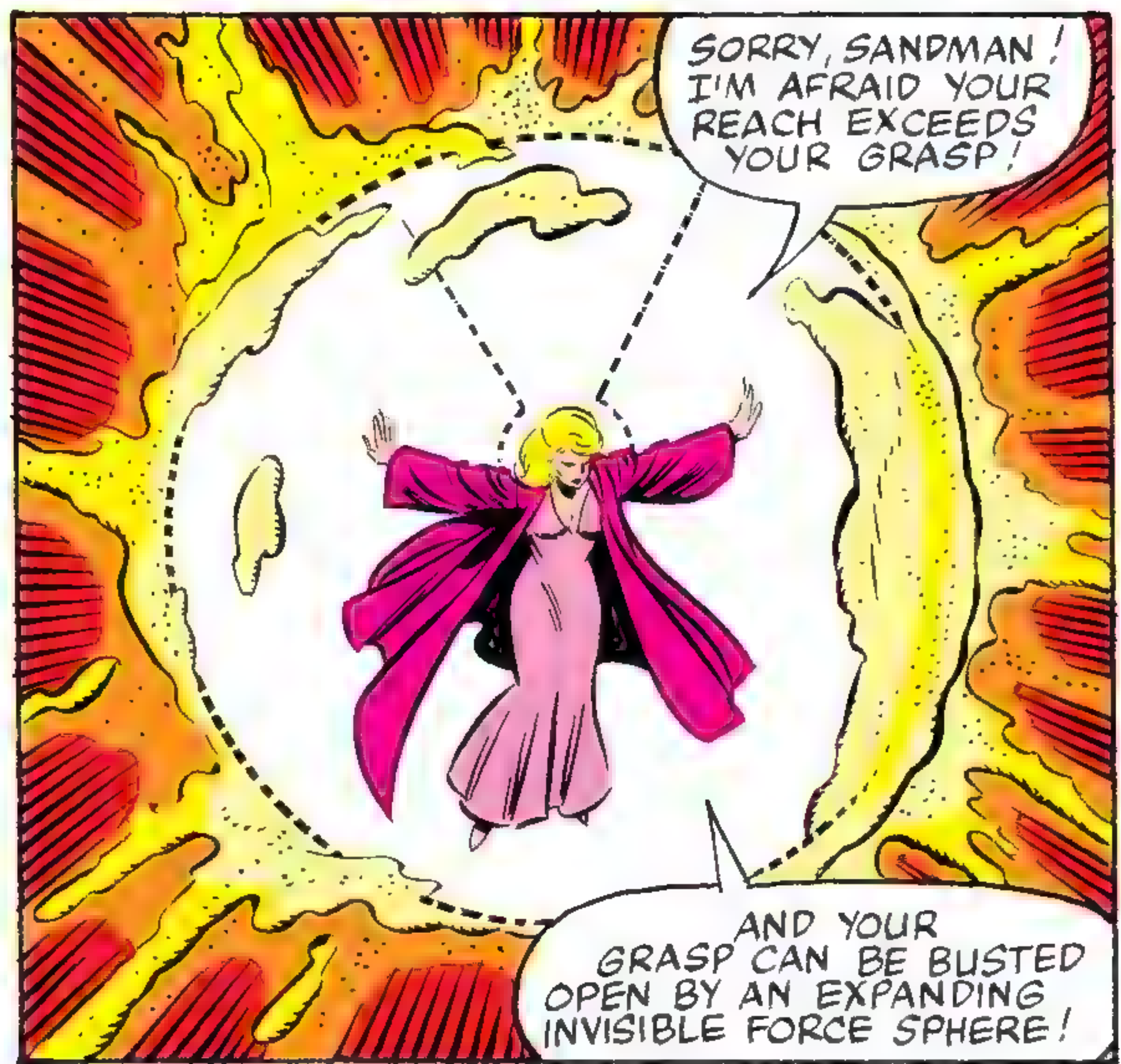
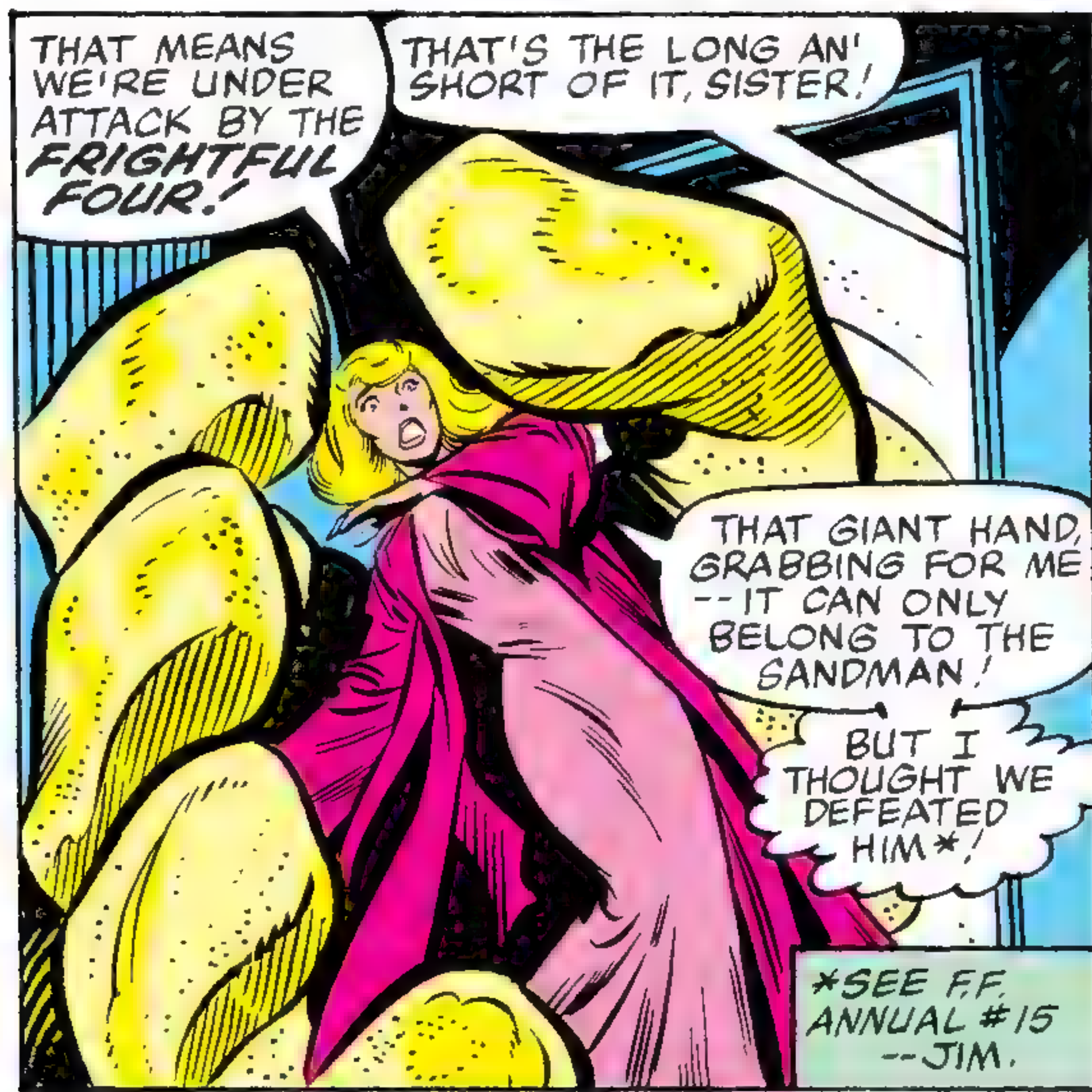
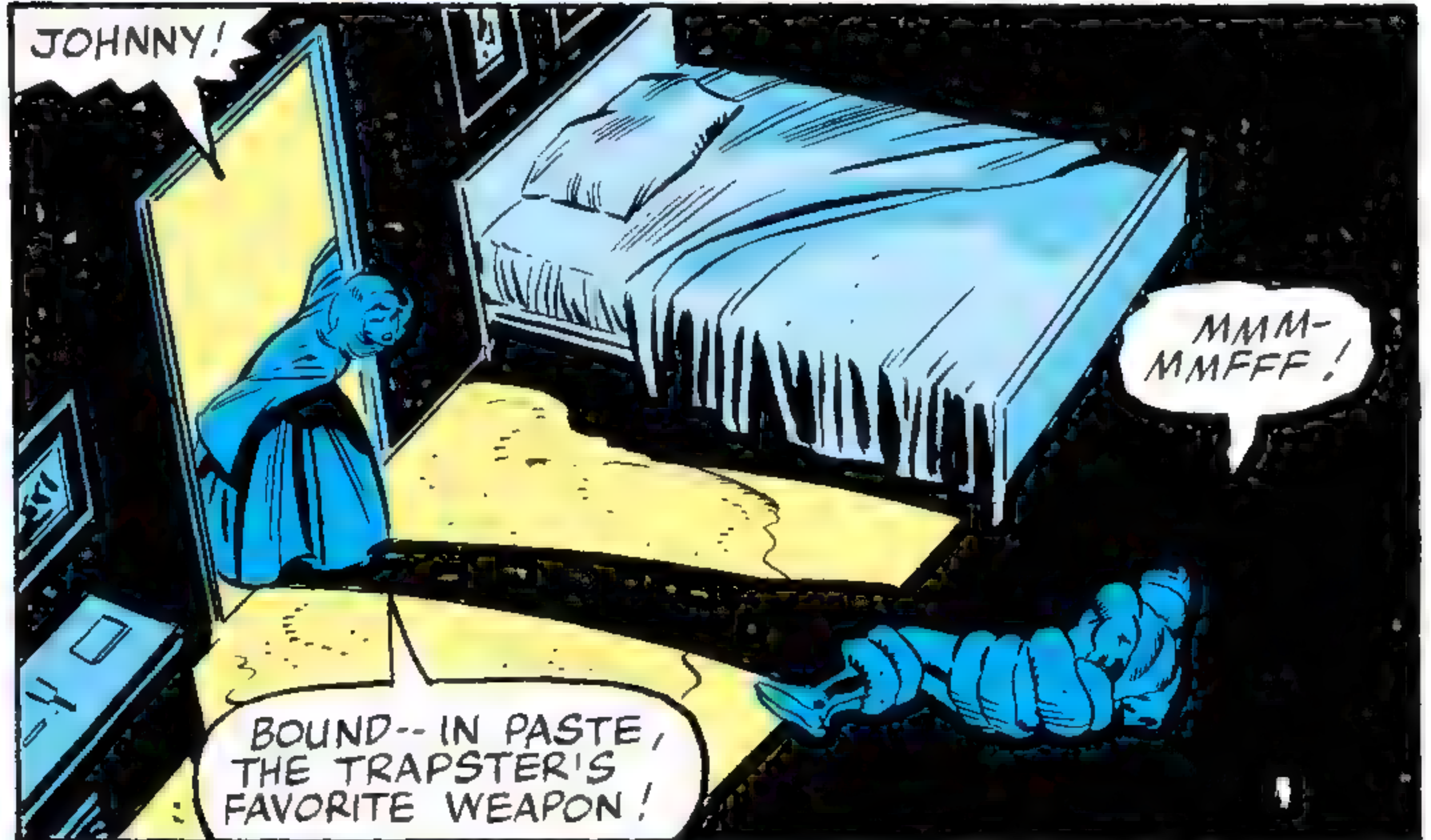
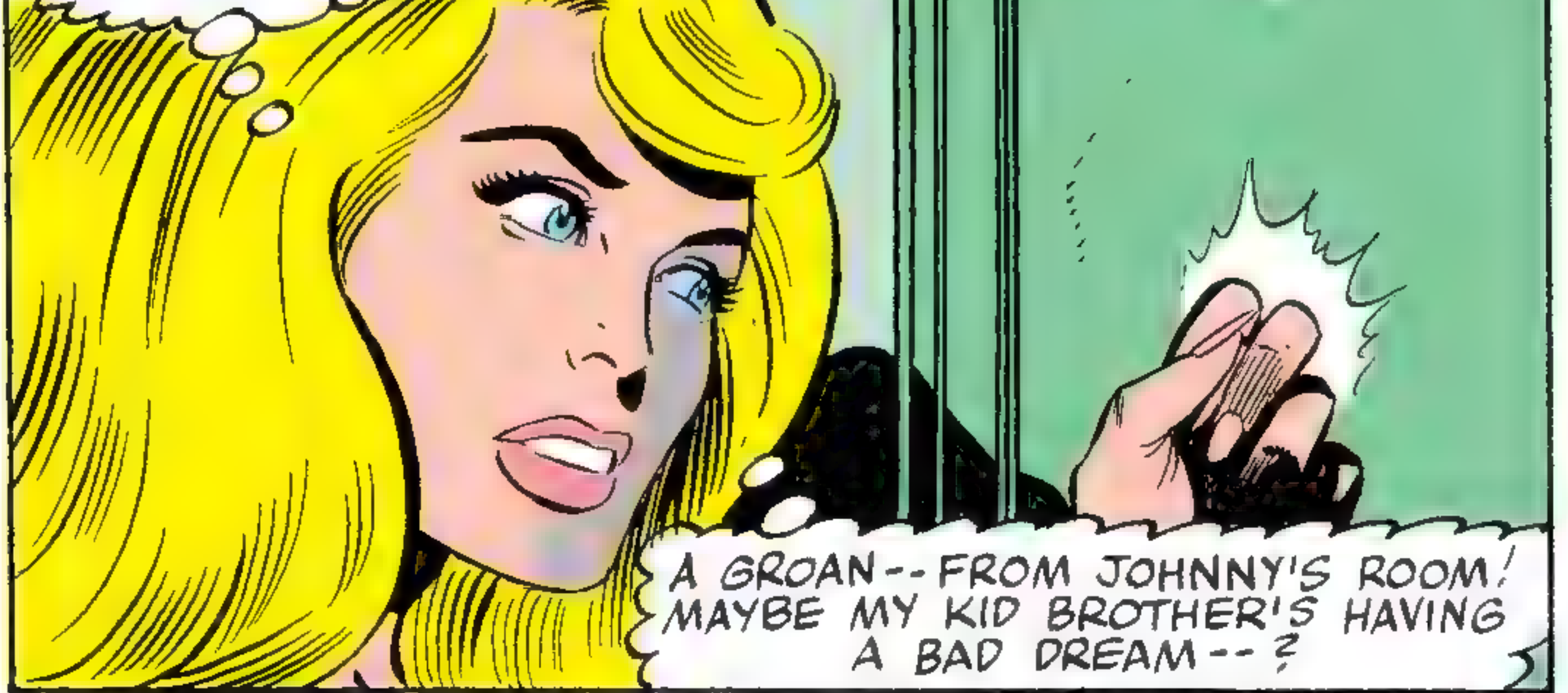


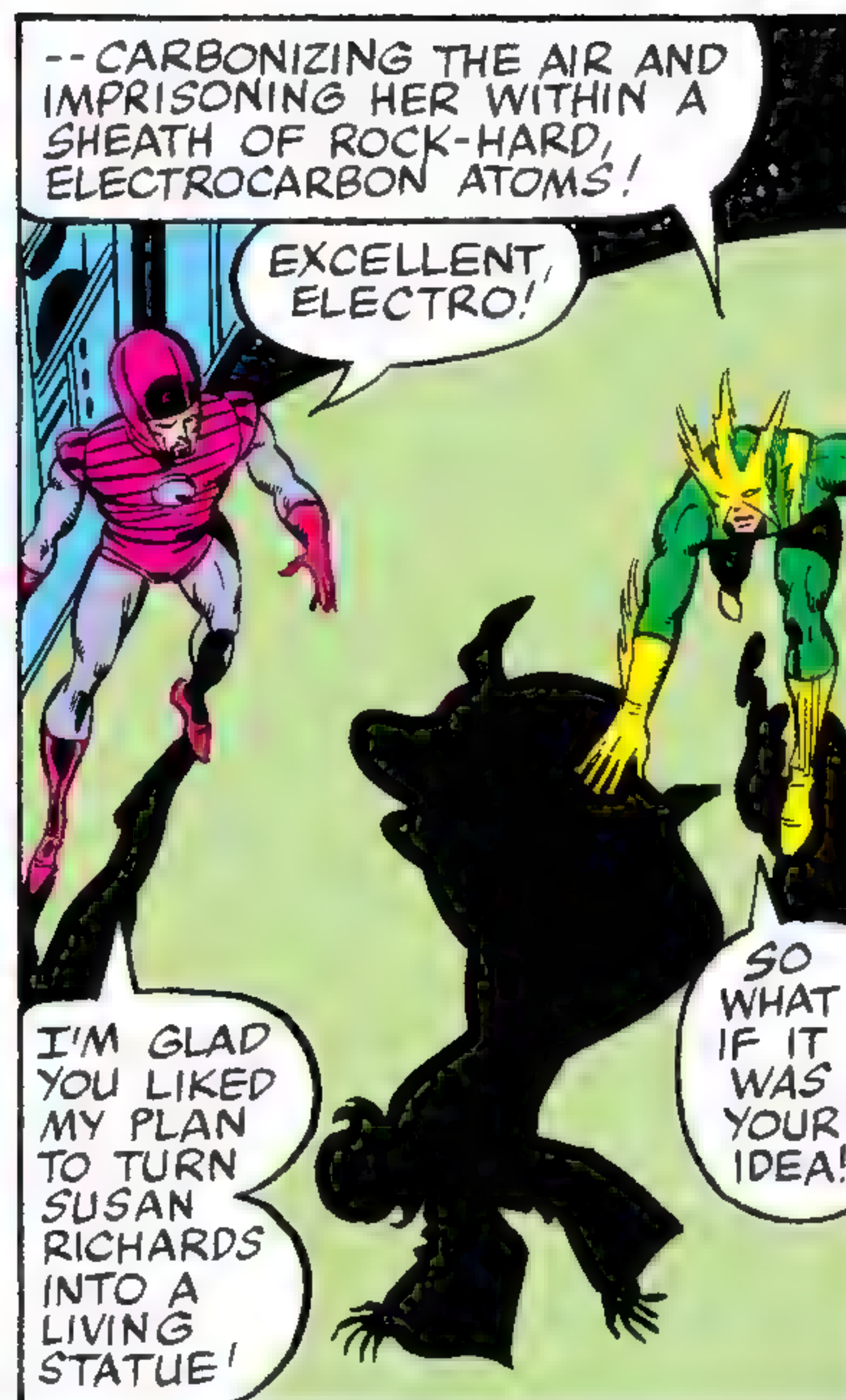


MEANWHILE, IN THE LIVING CHAMBER OF REED AND SUE RICHARDS, THE DISTAFF MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARISES FROM HER BED AND...

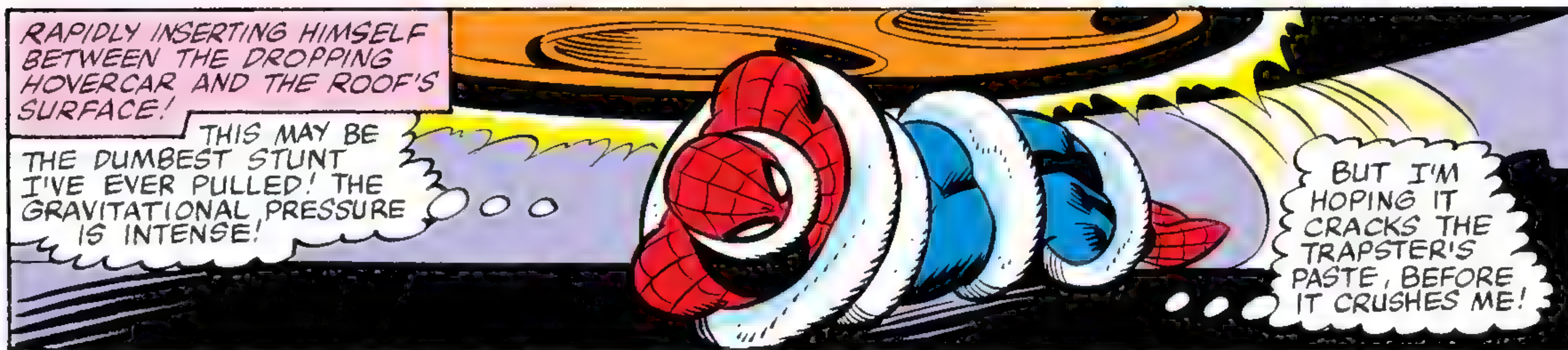
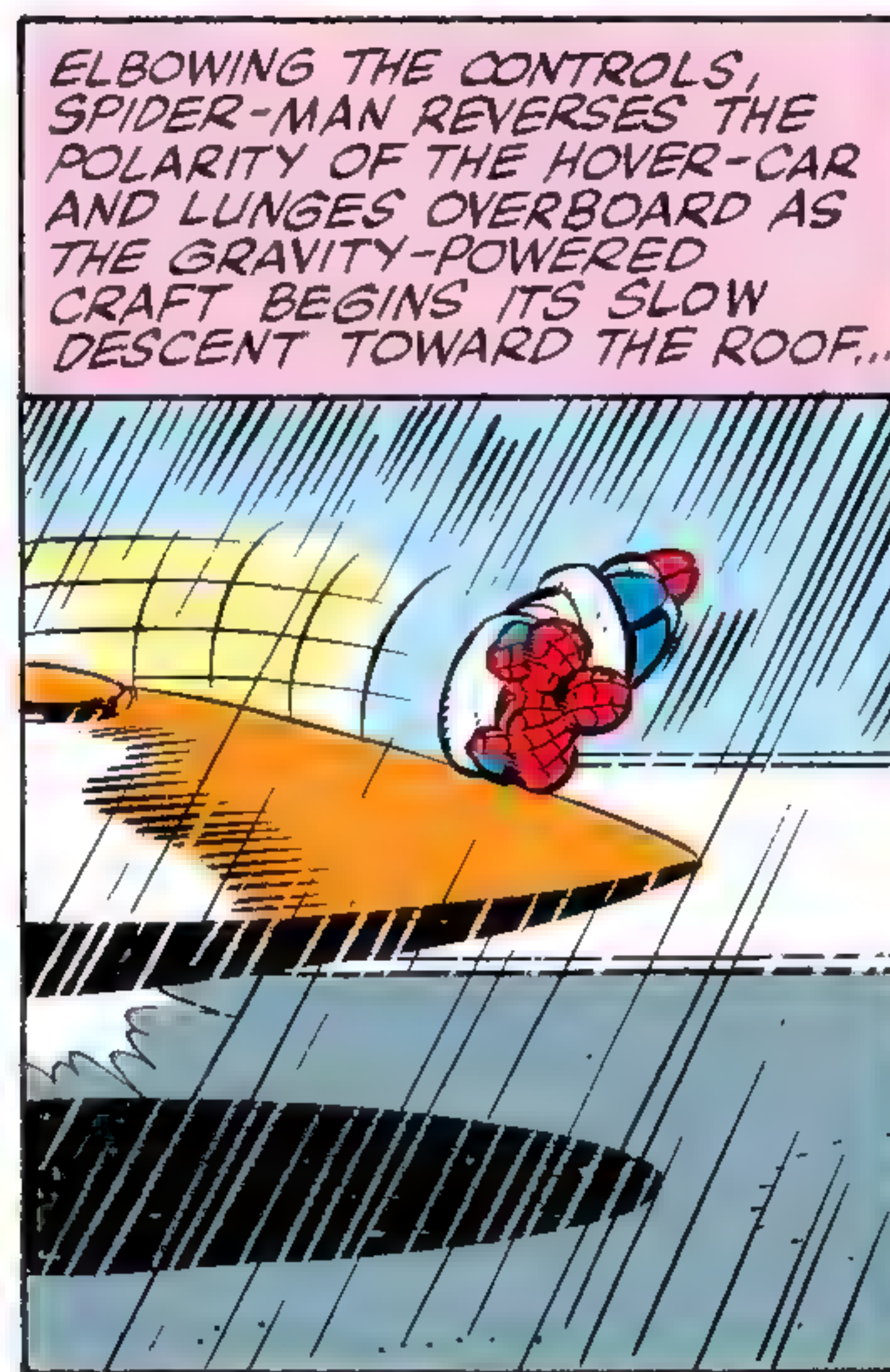
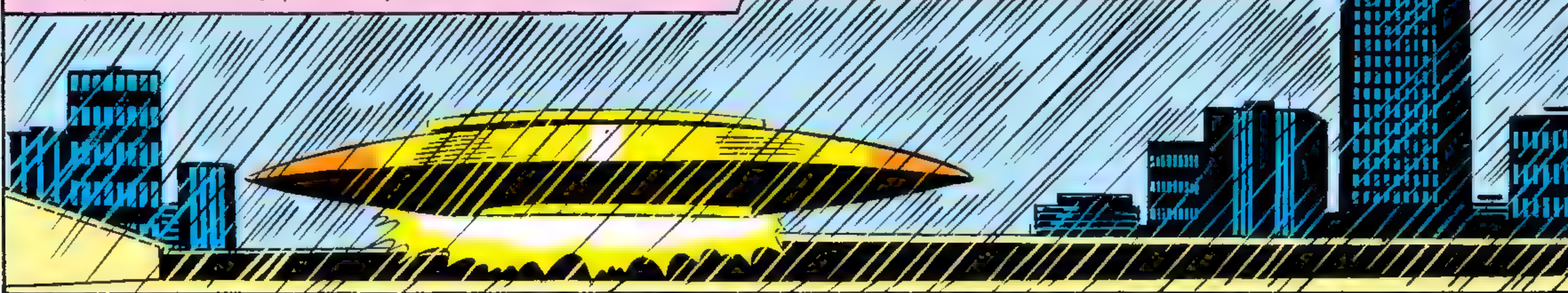


I'D BETTER GO REMIND HIM OF HIS HUSBANDLY DUTIES!





AS THE SUPER-POWERFUL OUTLAWS BICKER, LET US TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THEIR ORIGINAL CAPTIVE, THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN--



AS SPIDER-MAN CARRIES OUT HIS DESPERATE BID FOR FREEDOM, REED RICHARDS, LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR, WORKS INTENTLY IN HIS LABORATORY, OBLIVIOUS TO THE DANGER BEHIND HIM...

THIS IS IT! NO MORE NEED FOR MY SPIDER-MAN DISGUISE!

HE WON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT HIT HIM!

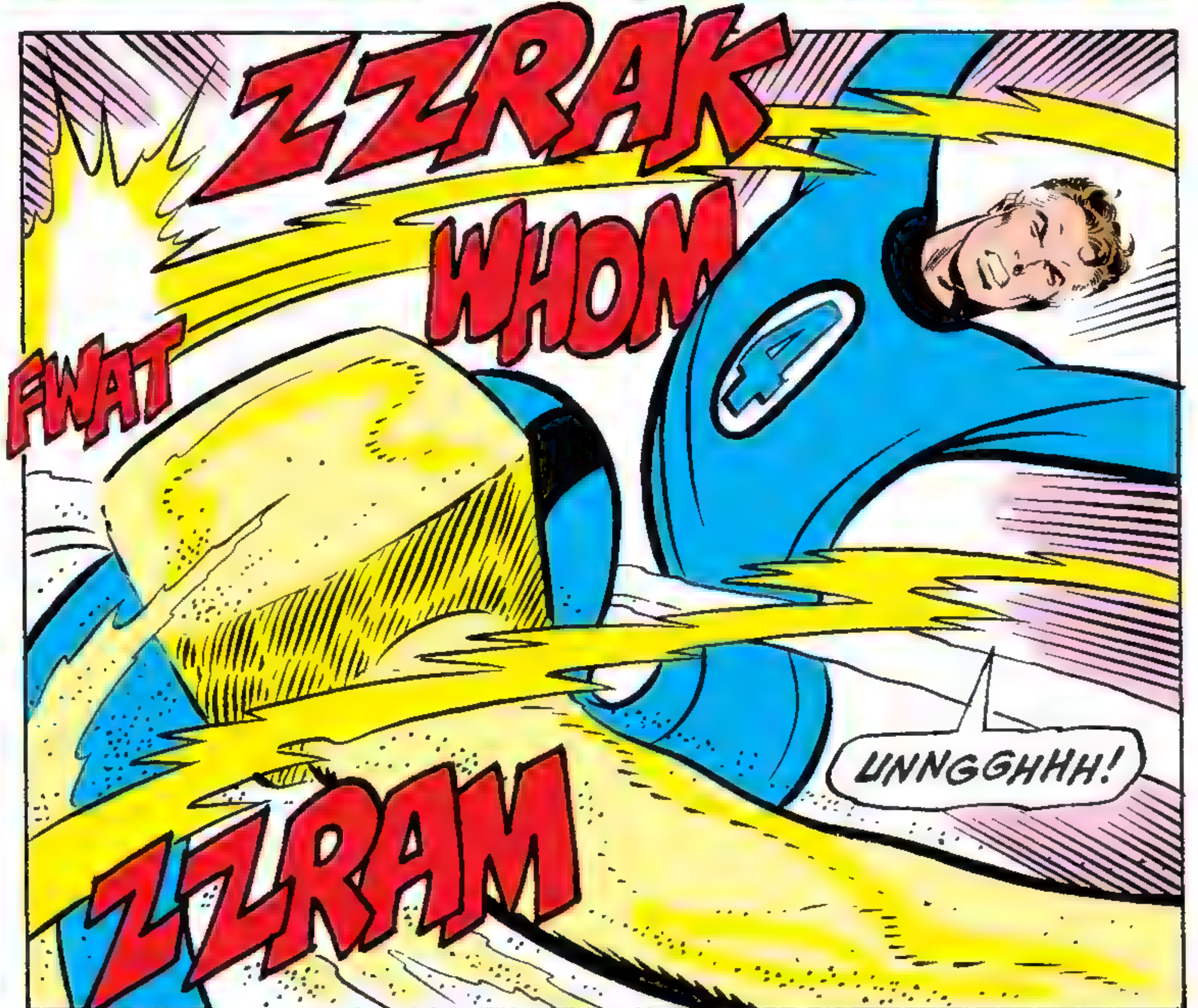
LOOK AT THE WIZARD GLOAT! HE'S WAITED YEARS FOR THIS!

BUT THEN, AIN'T WE ALL?

TURN, REED RICHARDS!

TURN AND FACE THOSE WHO WILL DESTROY YOU!!

EH?



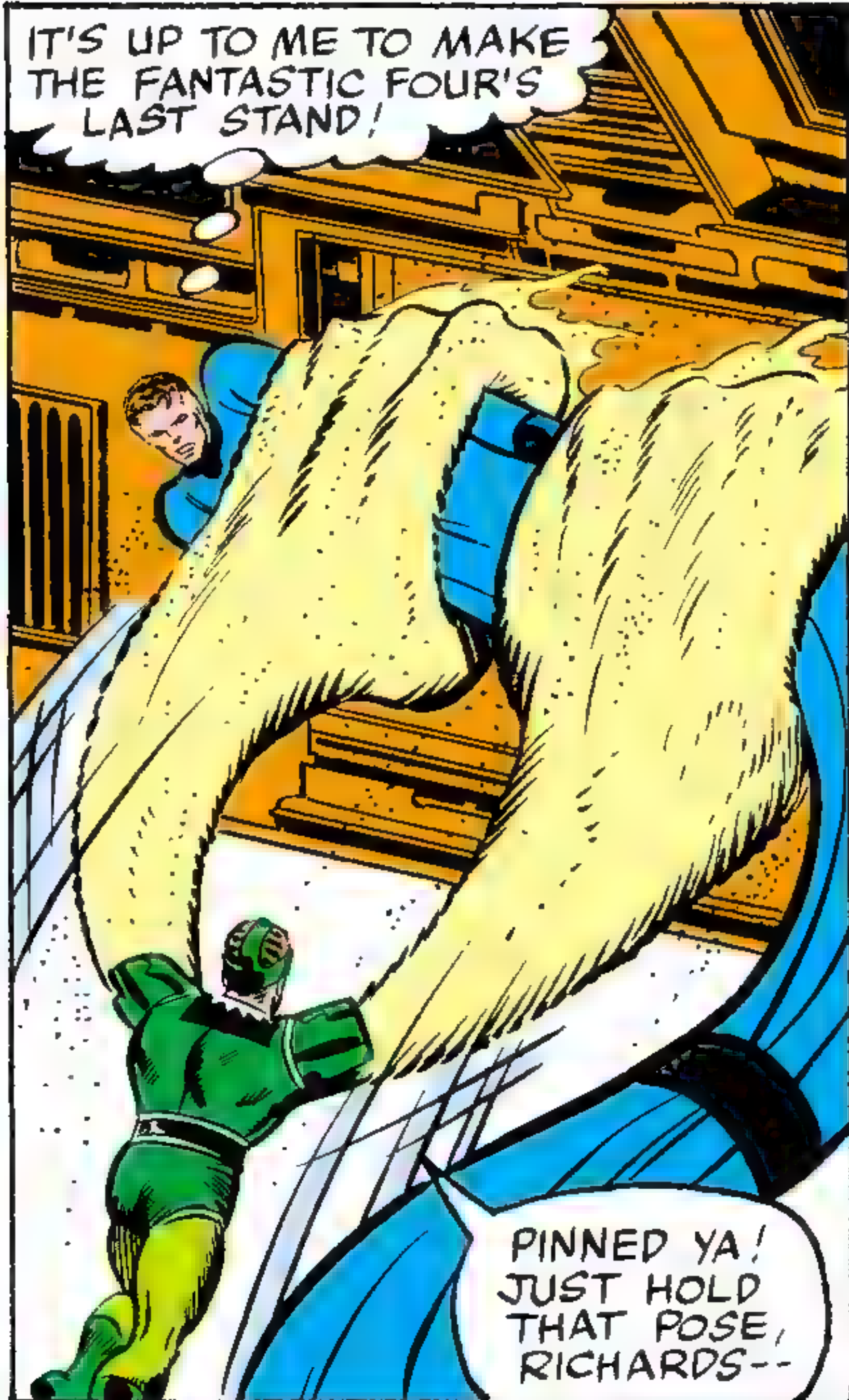
SAVED FROM SERIOUS HARM BY HIS QUICK REFLEXES AND HIS PLIABLE FORM, MR. FANTASTIC SPRINGS INTO ACTION!

THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR, WITH ELECTRO, THEIR NEWEST MEMBER! THEY MUST HAVE BREACHED THE TEMPORARY ALARMS WHILE I WAS REPAIRING OUR DAMAGED DEFENSE SYSTEMS!

AND IF THEY'VE COME THIS FAR, THEY MUST HAVE ALREADY ENCOUNTERED SUE, BEN AND JOHNNY!

YOUR PARTNERS HAVE FALLEN, RICHARDS! YOU ARE THE LAST! AND MY ANTI-GRAVITY DISCS WILL EASILY RESTRAIN YOU!

NO GOOD, WIZARD! LUCKY FOR YOU THE SANDMAN'S ON THE JOB!



IT'S UP TO ME TO MAKE THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S LAST STAND!

PINNED YA! JUST HOLD THAT POSE, RICHARDS--



-- WHILE THE TRAPSTER MAKES IT PERMANENT!

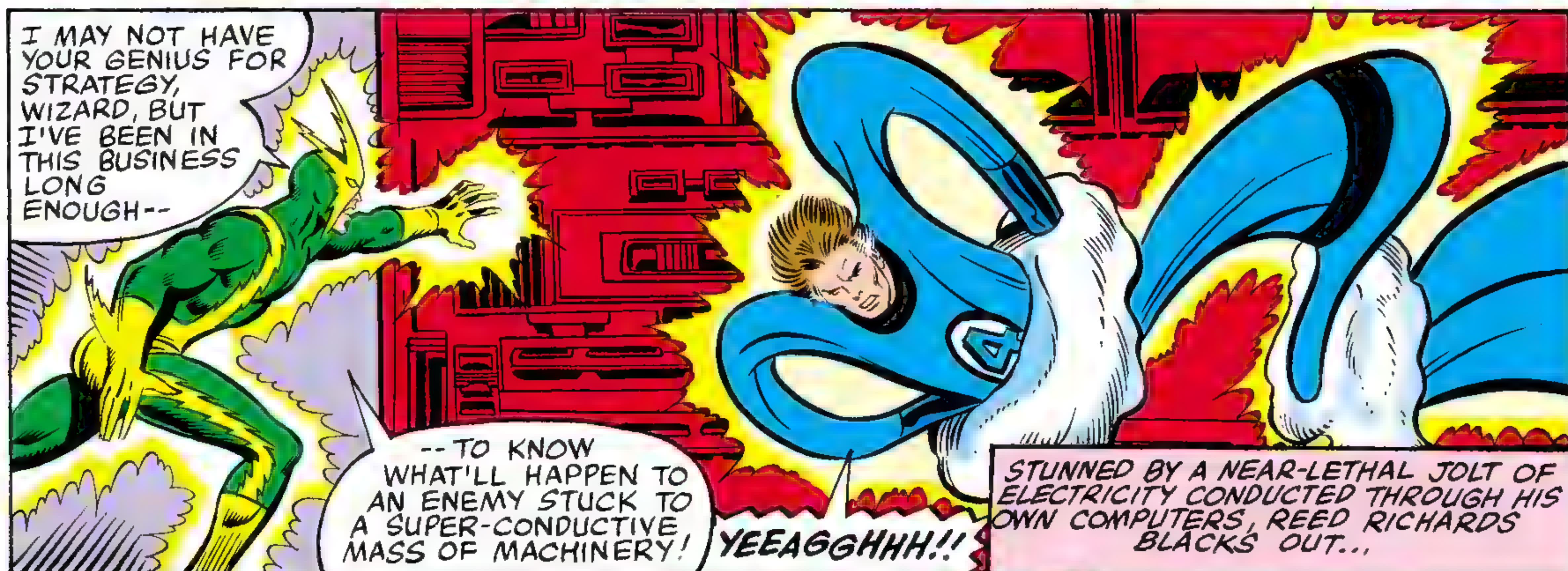
FUNNY, EVERYBODY LAUGHED WHEN I USED TO CALL MYSELF **PASTE-POT PETE!** THE WEAPON'S THE SAME...

BUT NOBODY LAUGHS AT THE TRAPSTER!



THE TRAPSTER'S PASTE EXPANDS AS I DO! I CAN'T STRETCH FREE!

AND NOW HE'S GLUING ME TO THE COMPUTER CONSOLE!

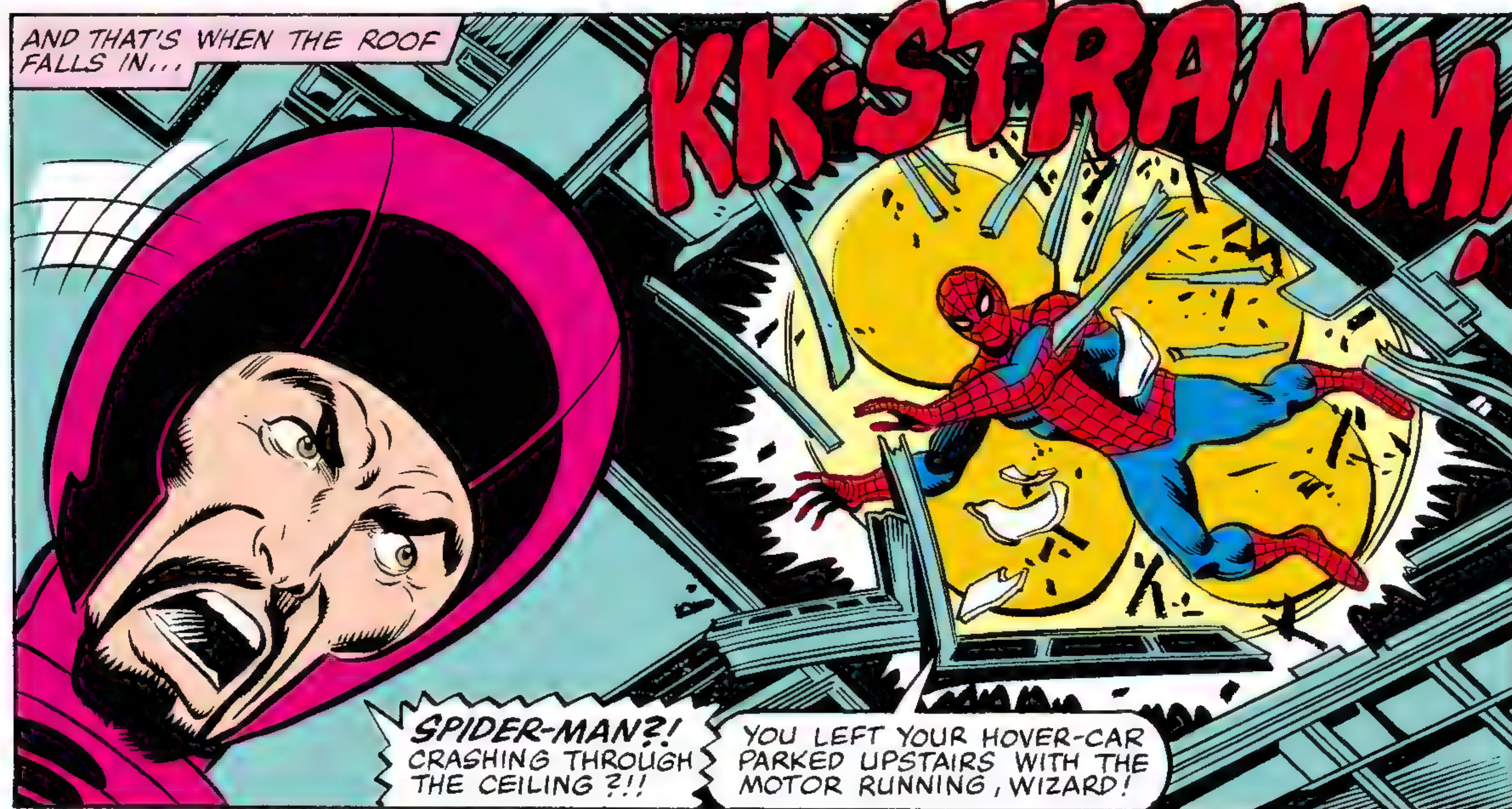


I MAY NOT HAVE YOUR GENIUS FOR STRATEGY, WIZARD, BUT I'VE BEEN IN THIS BUSINESS LONG ENOUGH--

-- TO KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO AN ENEMY STUCK TO A SUPER-CONDUCTIVE MASS OF MACHINERY!

YEEAGGHHH!!

STUNNED BY A NEAR-LETHAL JOLT OF ELECTRICITY CONDUCTED THROUGH HIS OWN COMPUTERS, REED RICHARDS BLACKS OUT...

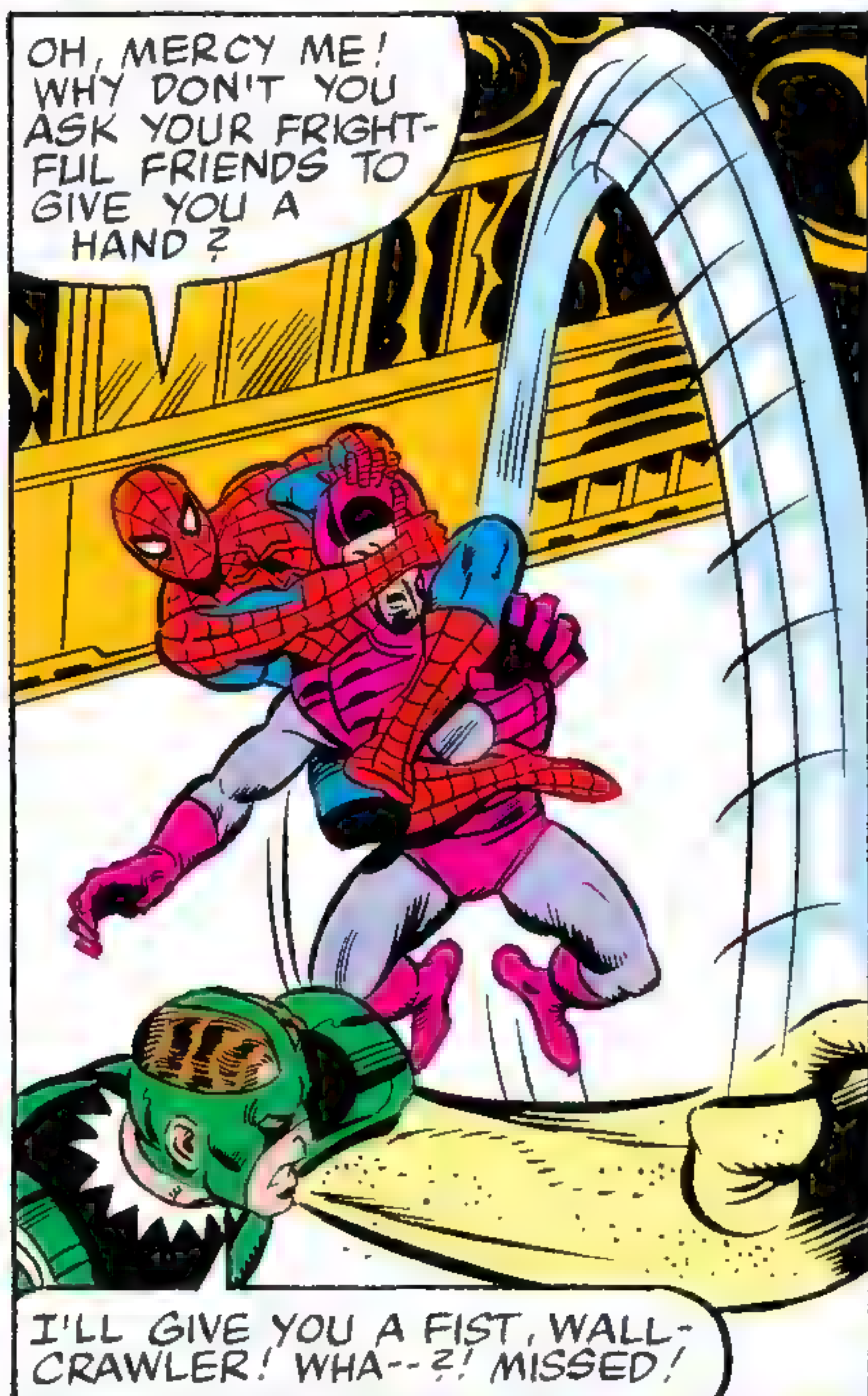
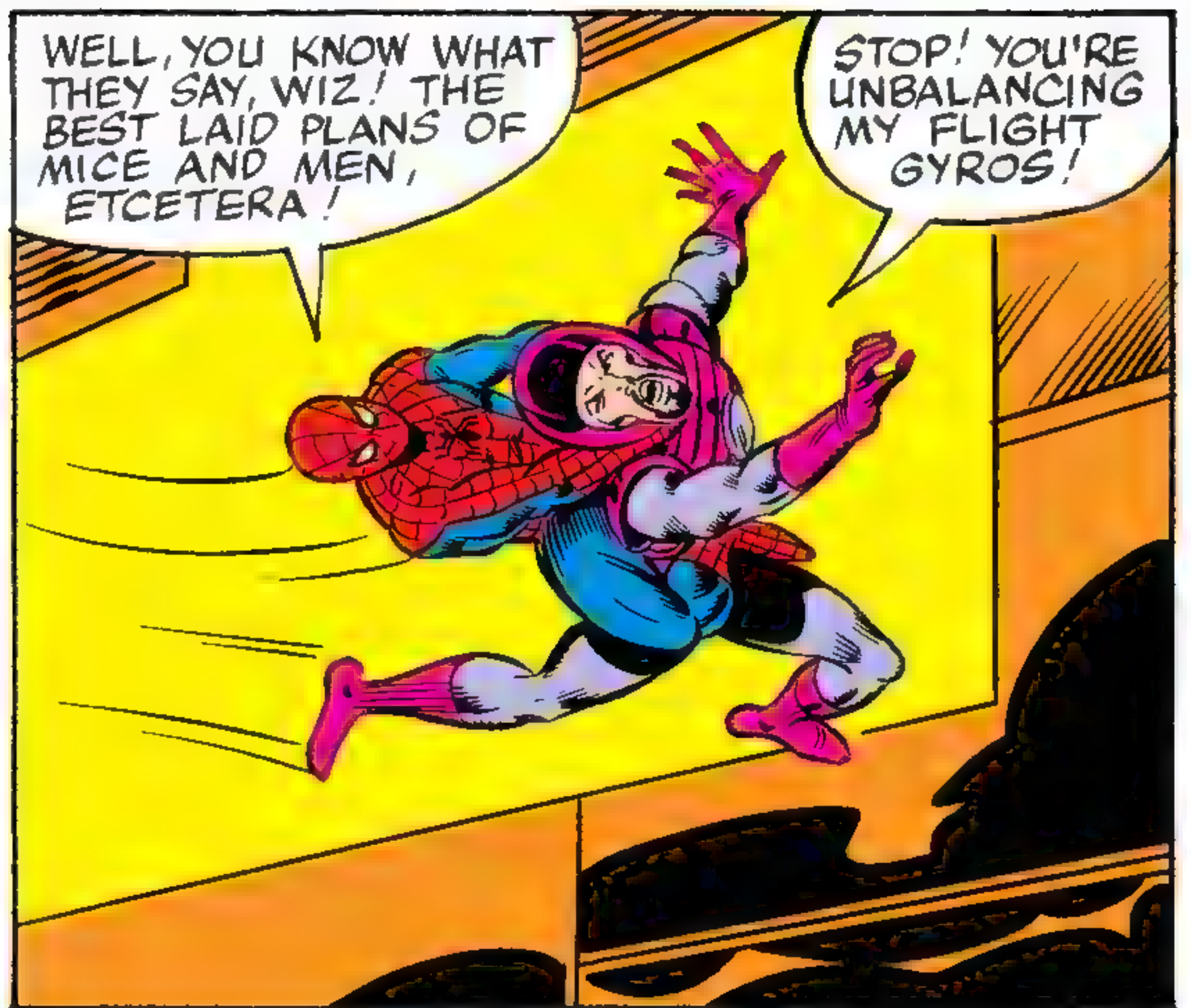


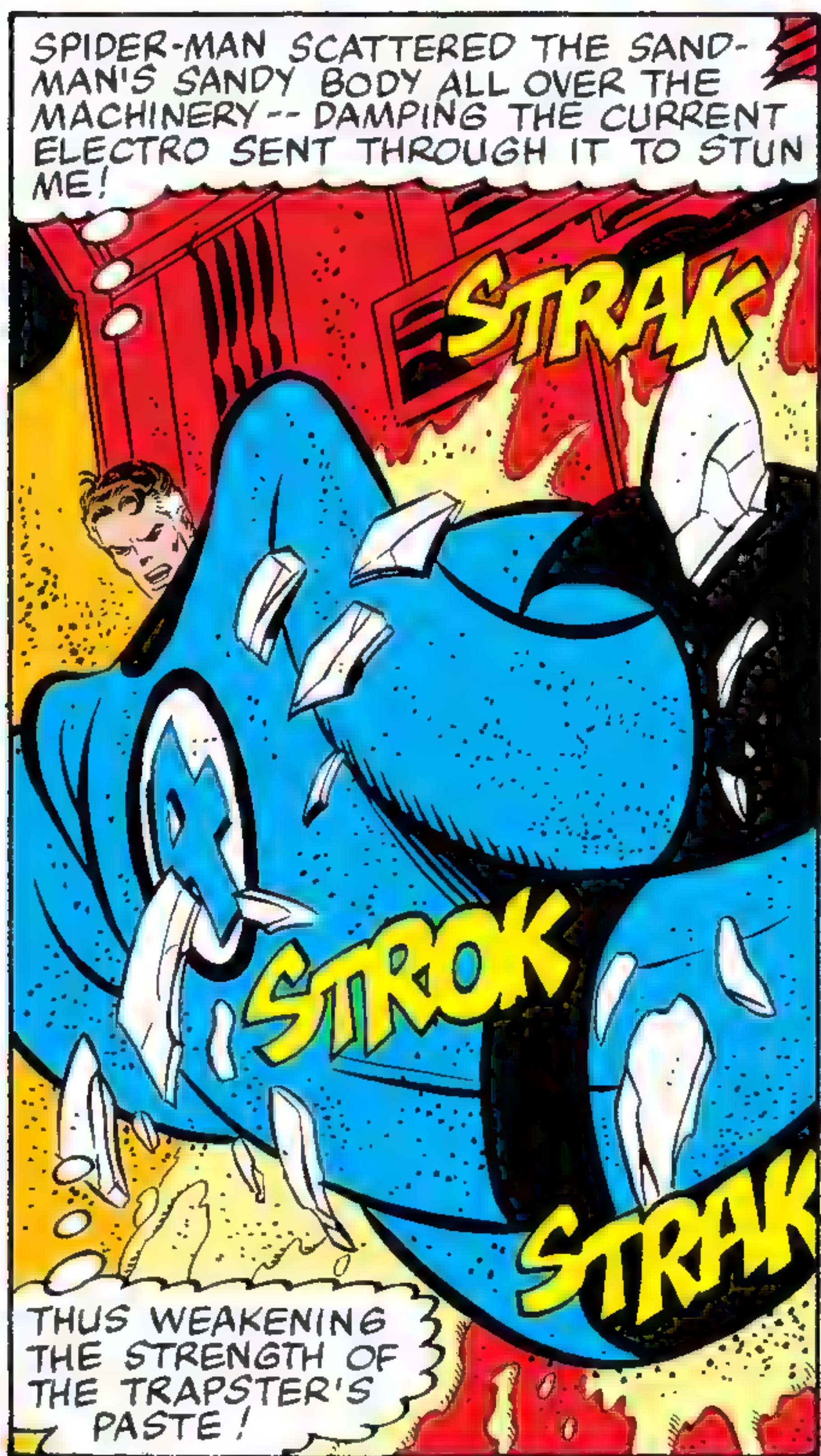
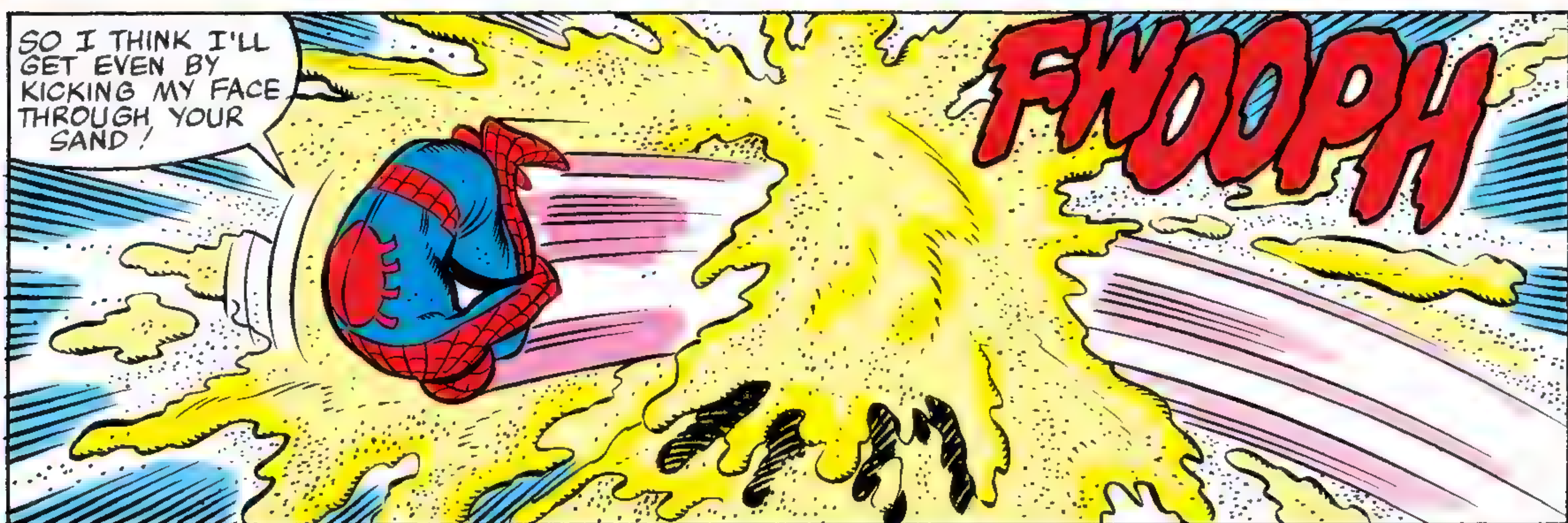
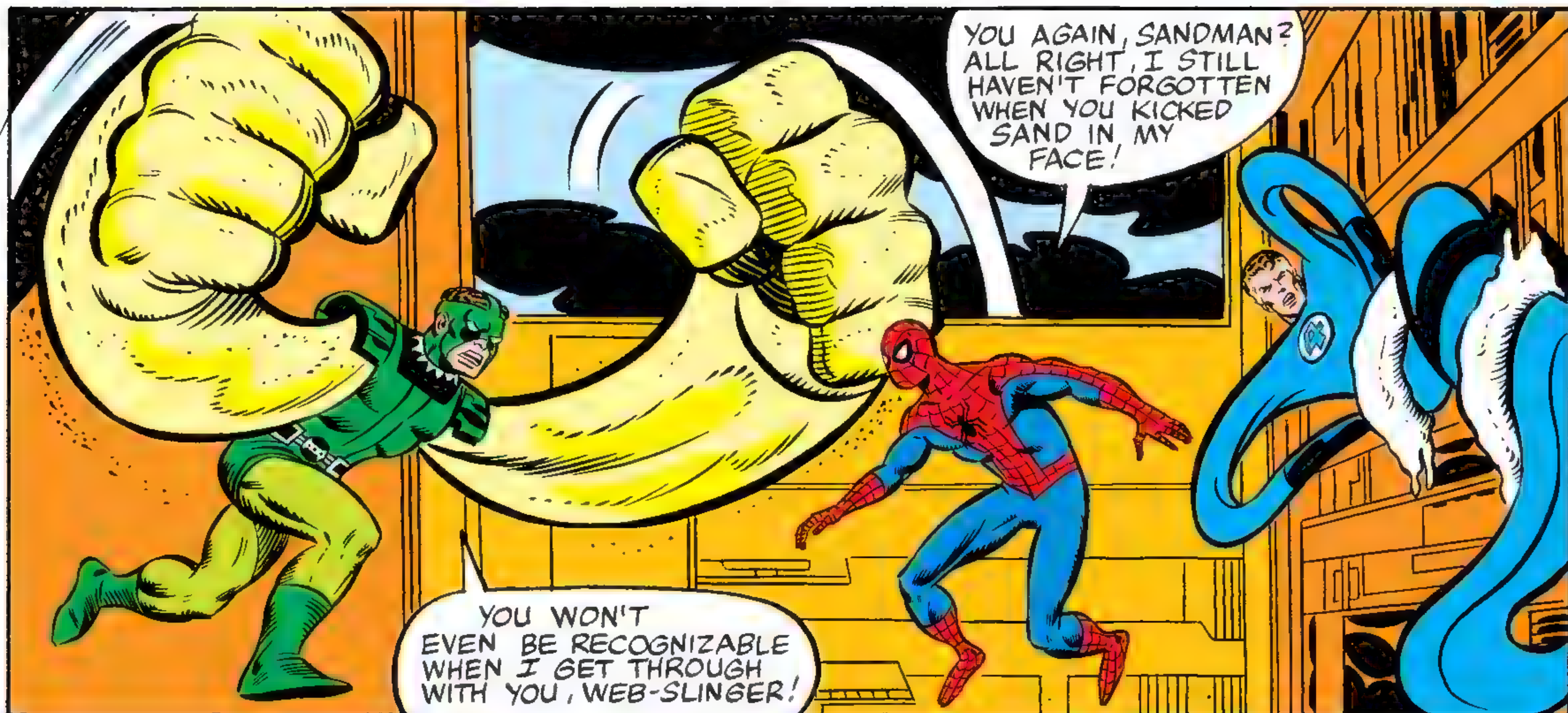
AND THAT'S WHEN THE ROOF FALLS IN...

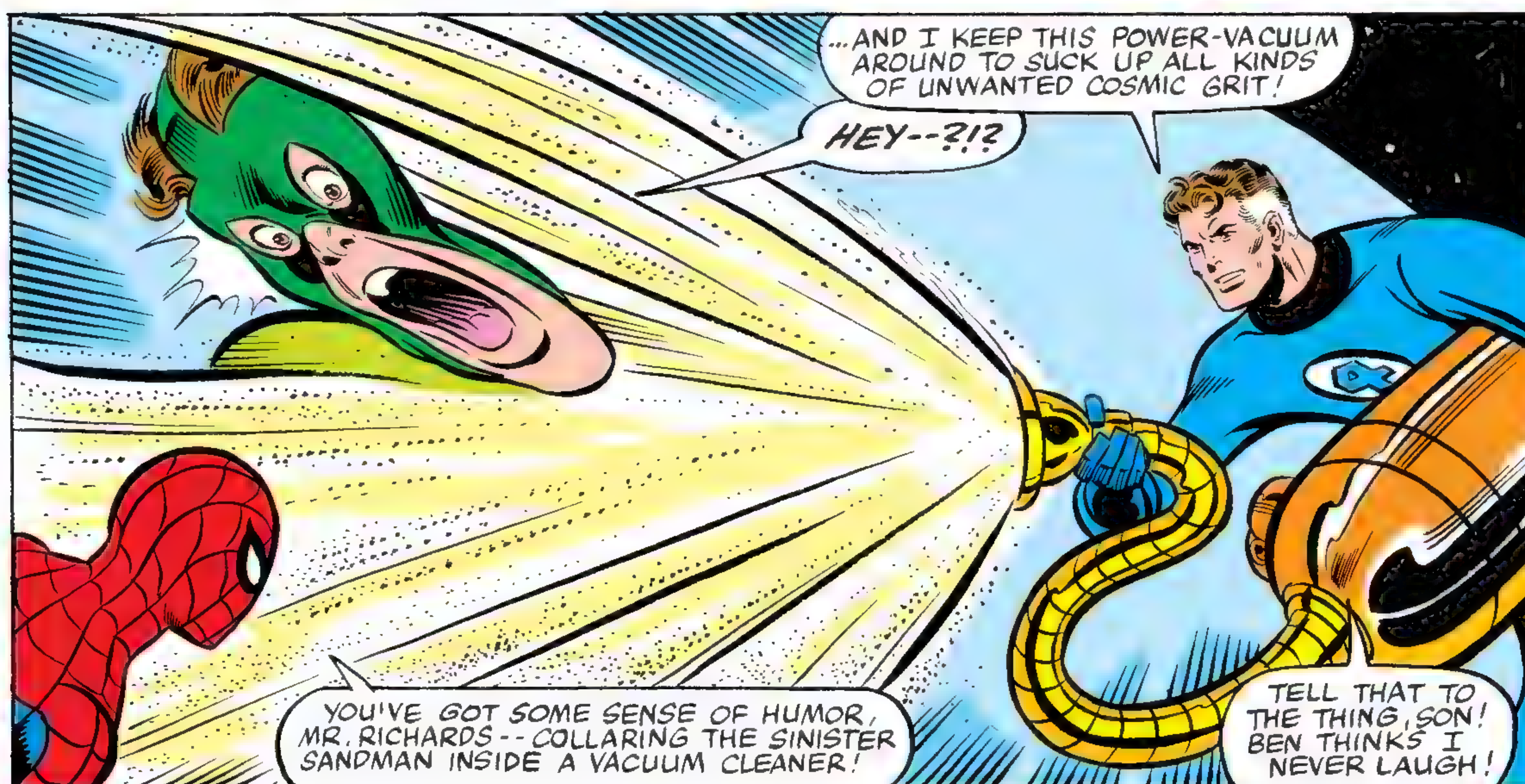
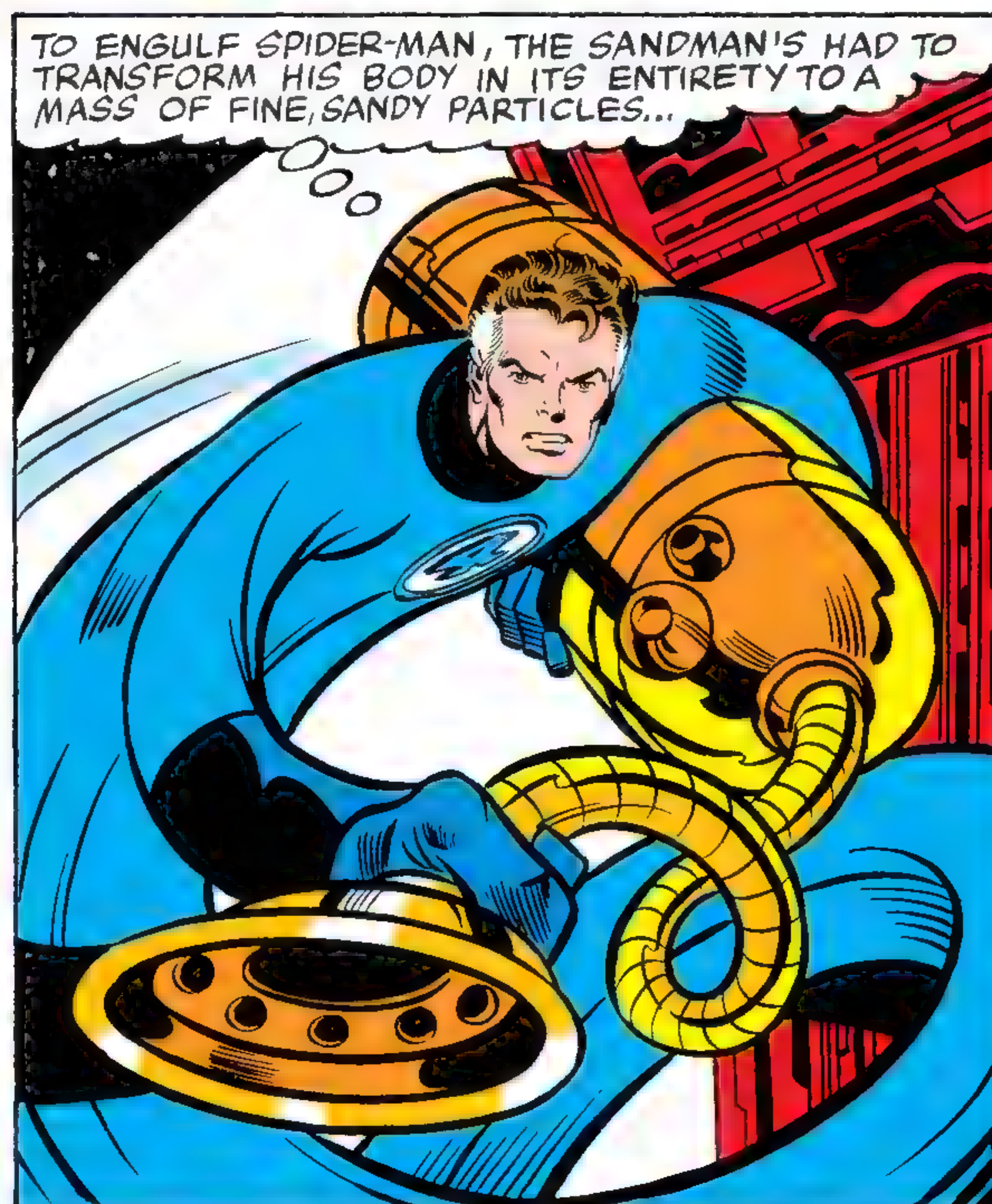
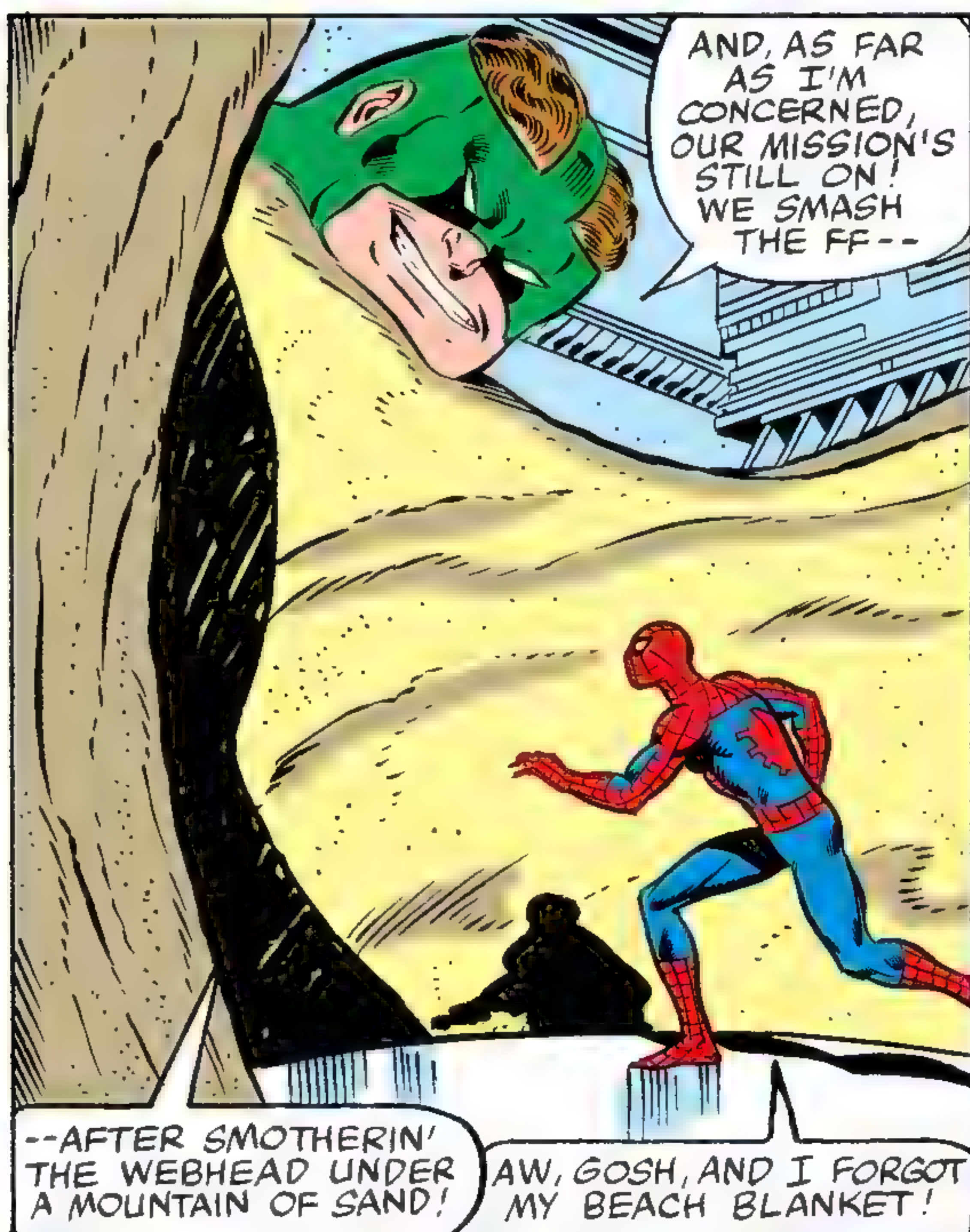
KK-STRAMM!

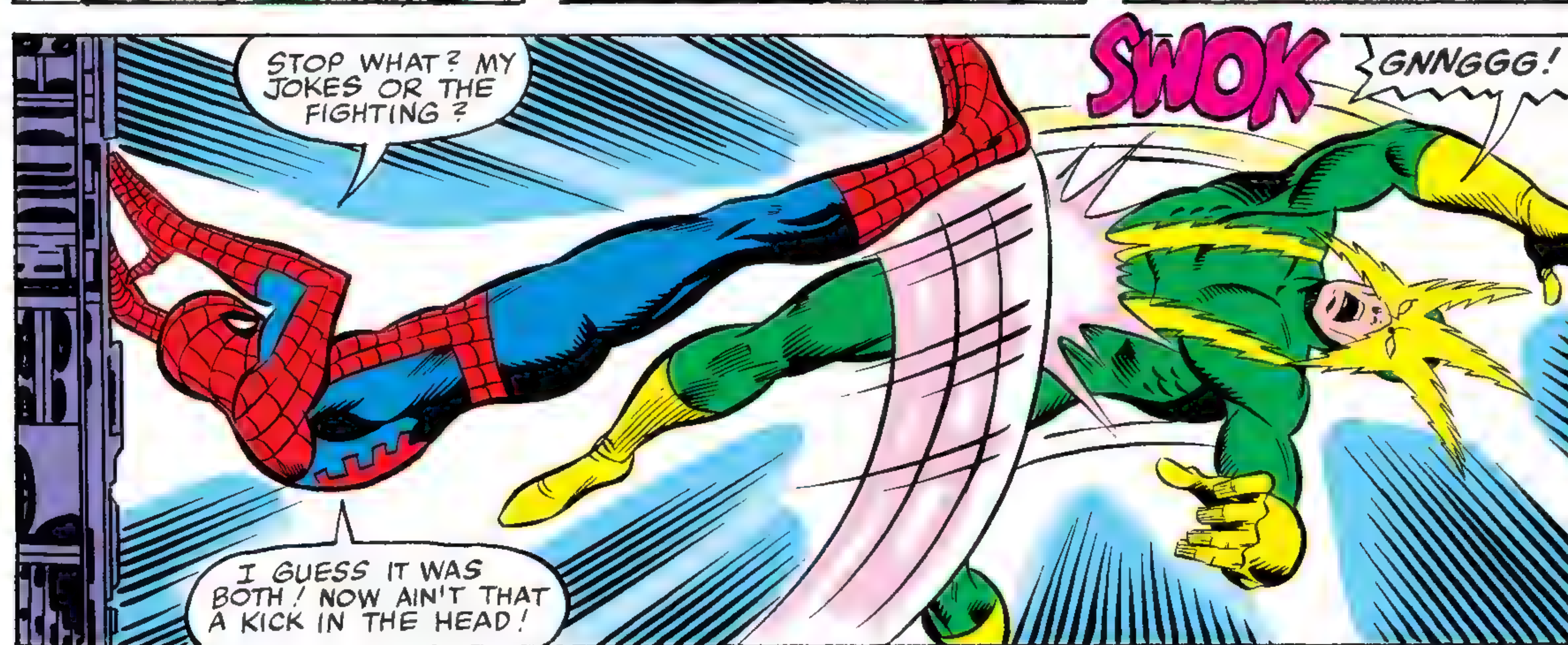
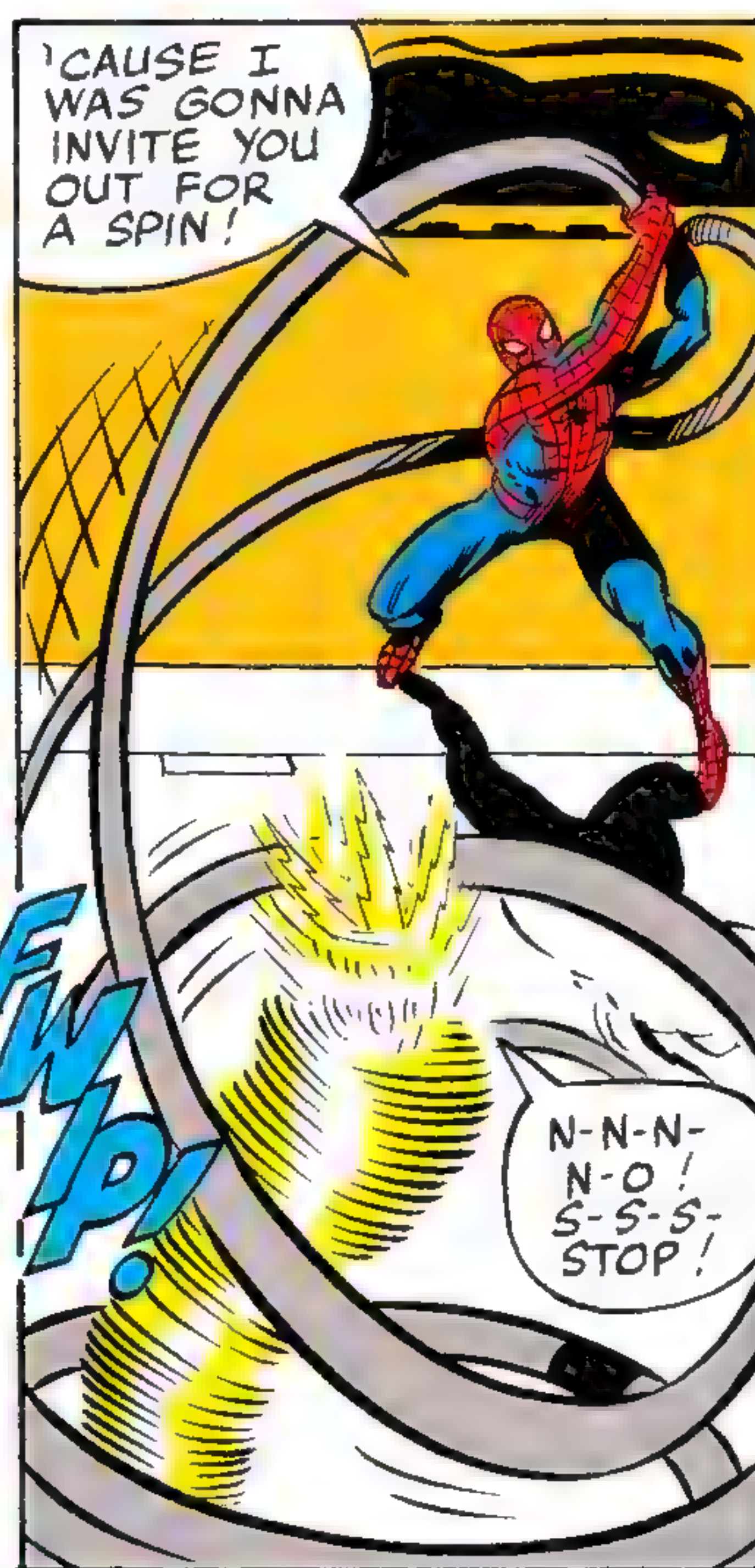
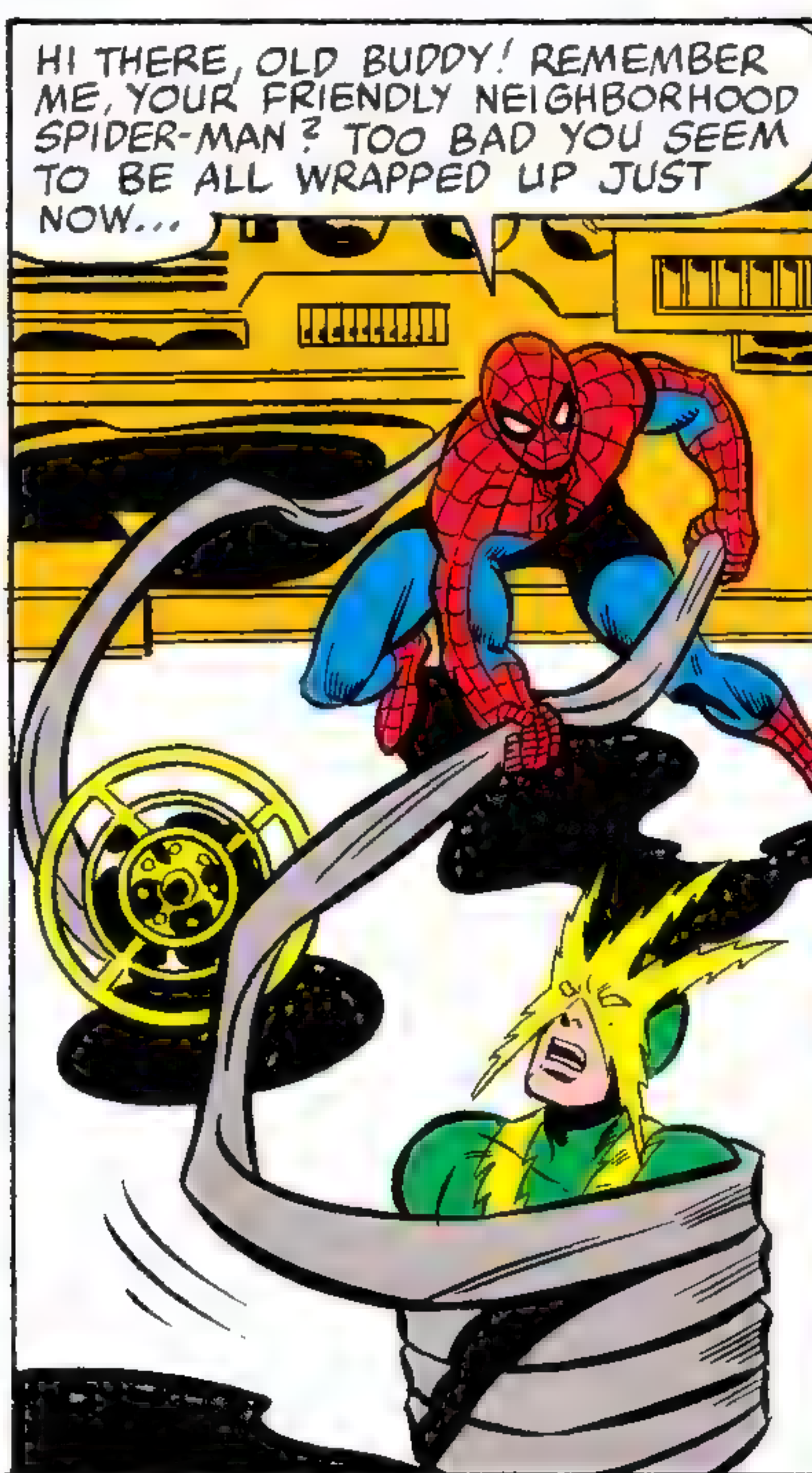
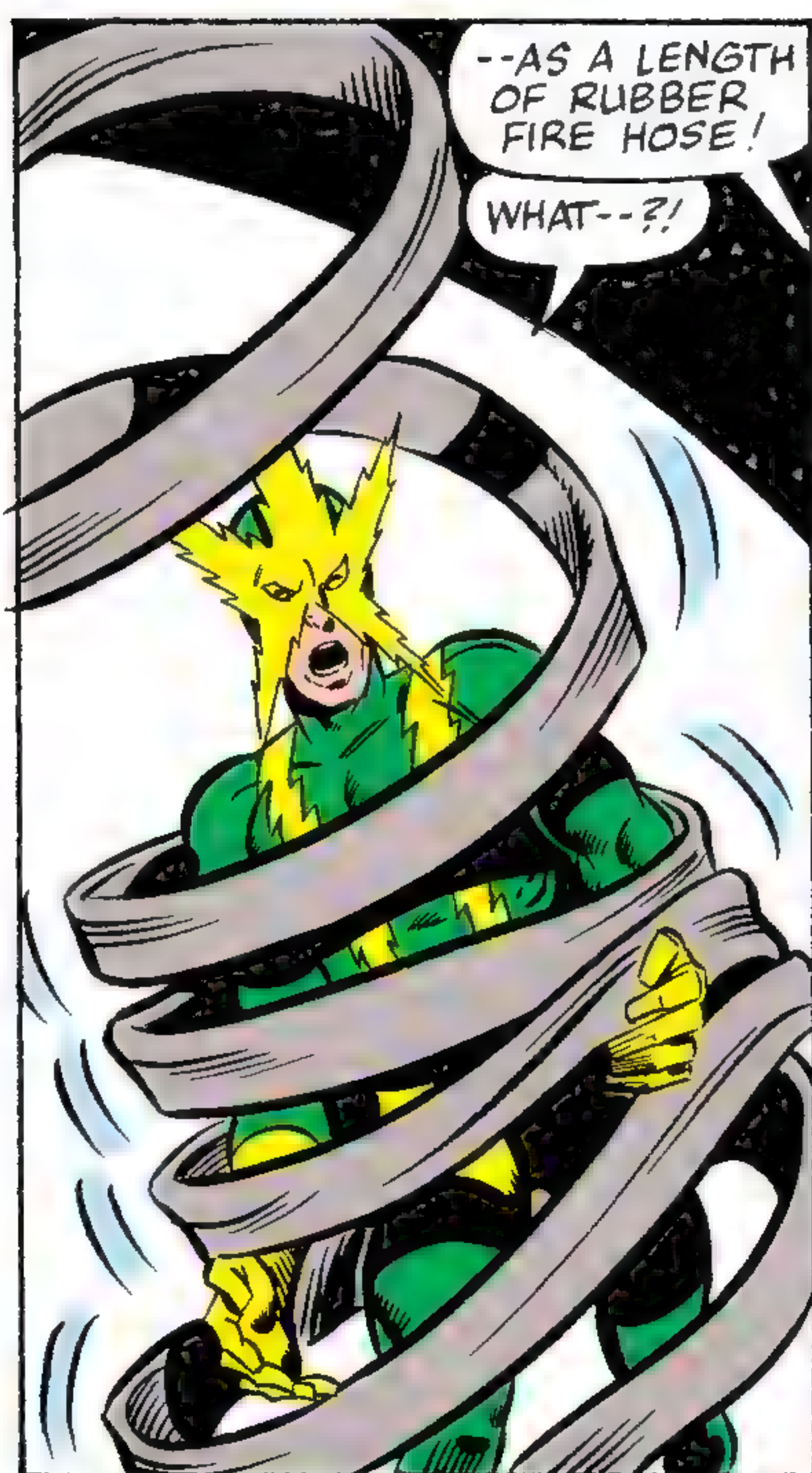
SPIDER-MAN?! CRASHING THROUGH THE CEILING ?!!

YOU LEFT YOUR HOVER-CAR PARKED UPSTAIRS WITH THE MOTOR RUNNING, WIZARD!









BUT WHAT OF THE REMAINING MEMBER OF THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR?

RICHARDS AND SPIDER-MAN HAVE MOPPED UP THE FLOOR WITH THE OTHERS! THAT LEAVES ME!



I MAY NOT BE NO GREAT BRAIN LIKE THE WIZARD, BUT SEEING WHERE HIS GENIUS GOT HIM--



--I THINK I'D RATHER BE A DOPE, AND FREE!

SWELL! NOBODY'S EVEN NOTICED I'M GONE! BY THE TIME THEY DO, I'LL...

GOIN' SOMEWHERE, PASTE-POT?



THAT IS WHAT YOU CALLED YOURSELF, ISN'T IT? PASTE-POT PETE?

YOU REMEMBER PETE'S CORNY OLD MONICKER TOO, TORCHY?

HE'S GOTTEN UPPITY SINCE THE OLD DAYS, CALLIN' HIMSELF BY A FANCY SUPER-VILLAIN HANDLE LIKE THE TRAPSTER!

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT THEY CALL THEMSELVES, BEN! ALL OUR ENEMIES END UP THE SAME WAY!



E-E-END UP?

YEAH, PASTE-POT! SOME ARE LUCKY--

--THEY GO TO PRISON!



SOME GET BAD CASES OF COSMIC INDIGESTION, OTHERS GET SWALLOWED UP BY THE NEGATIVE ZONE--

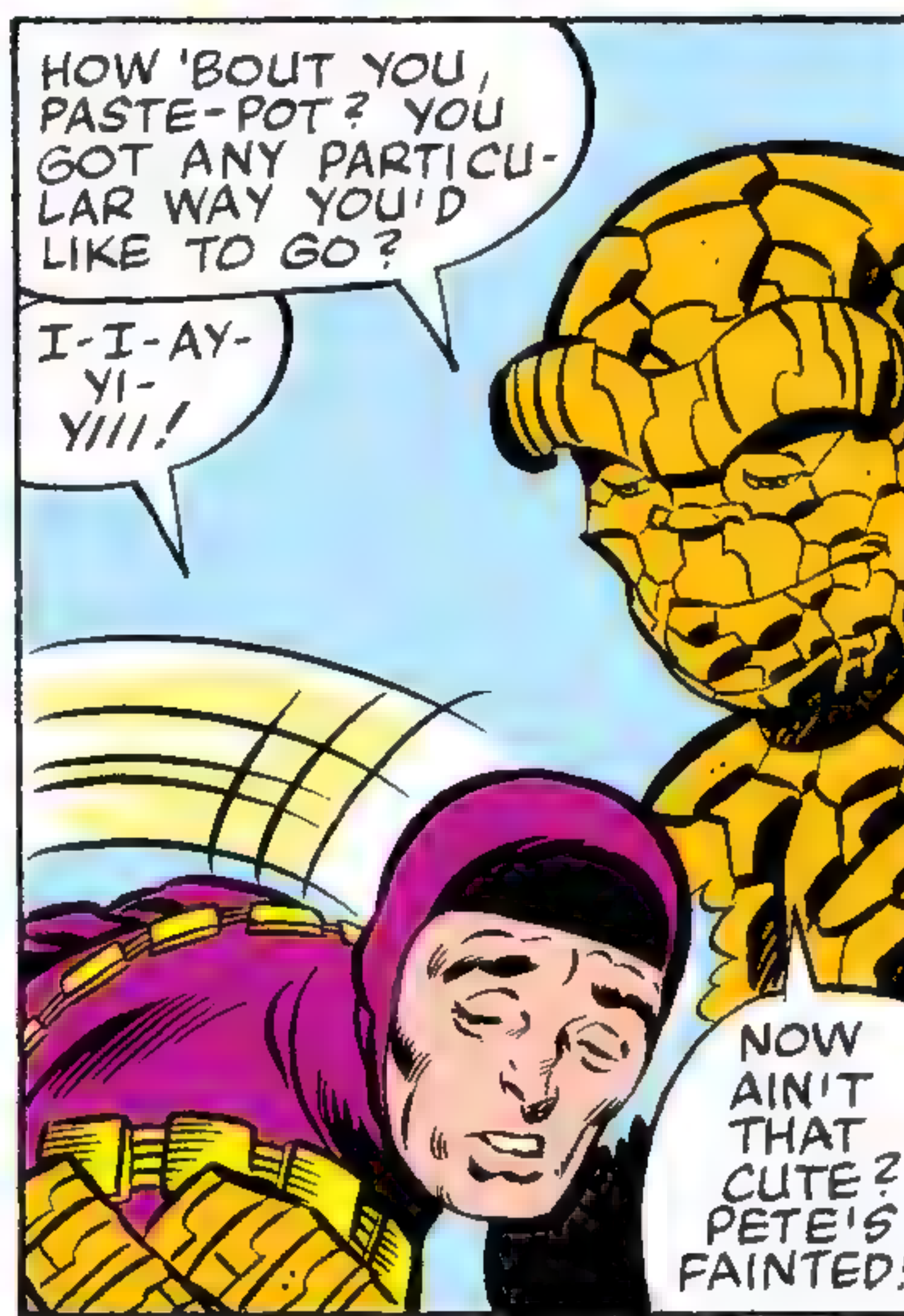
--AN SOME JUST GET BUSTED UP REAL BAD!

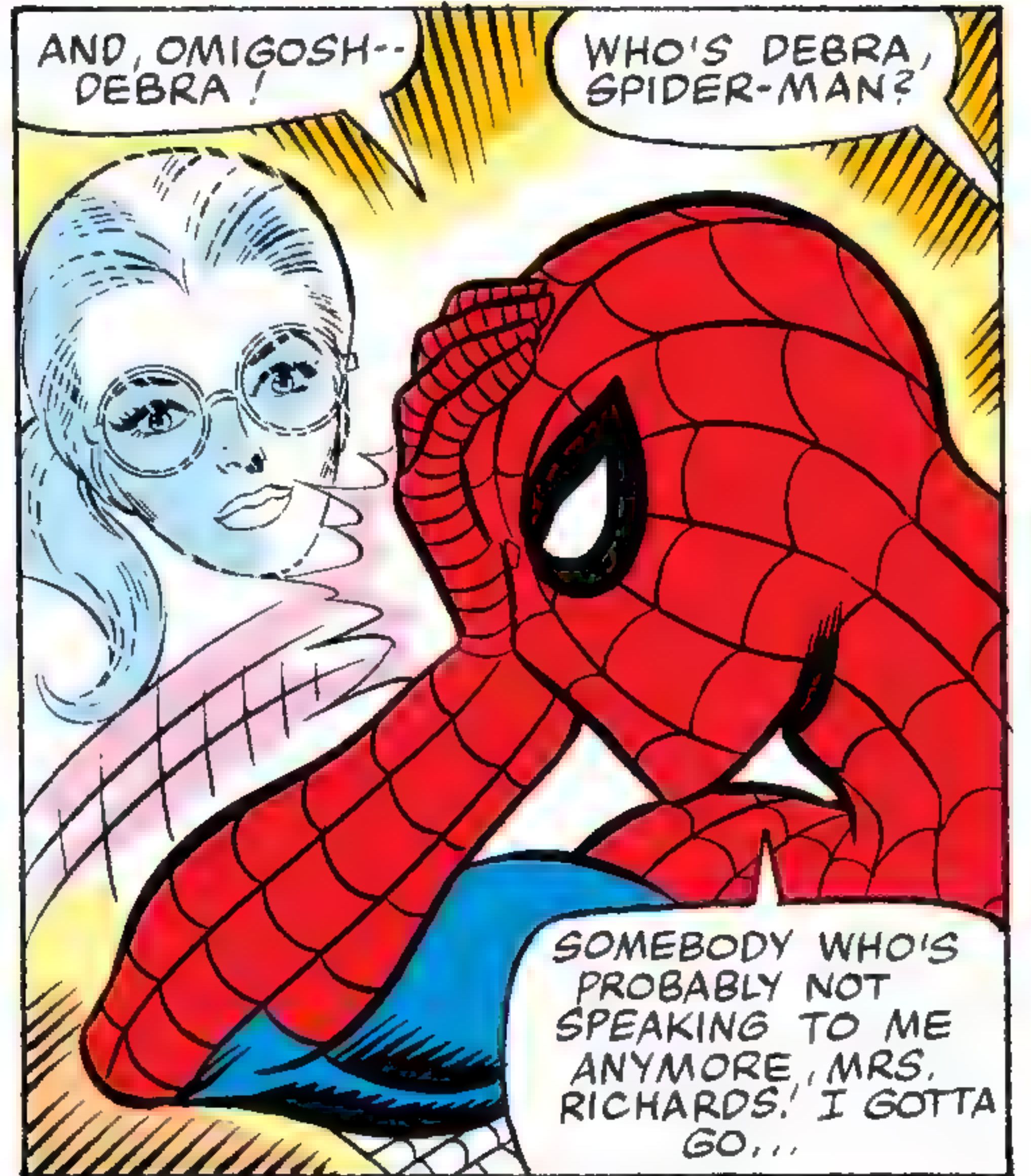
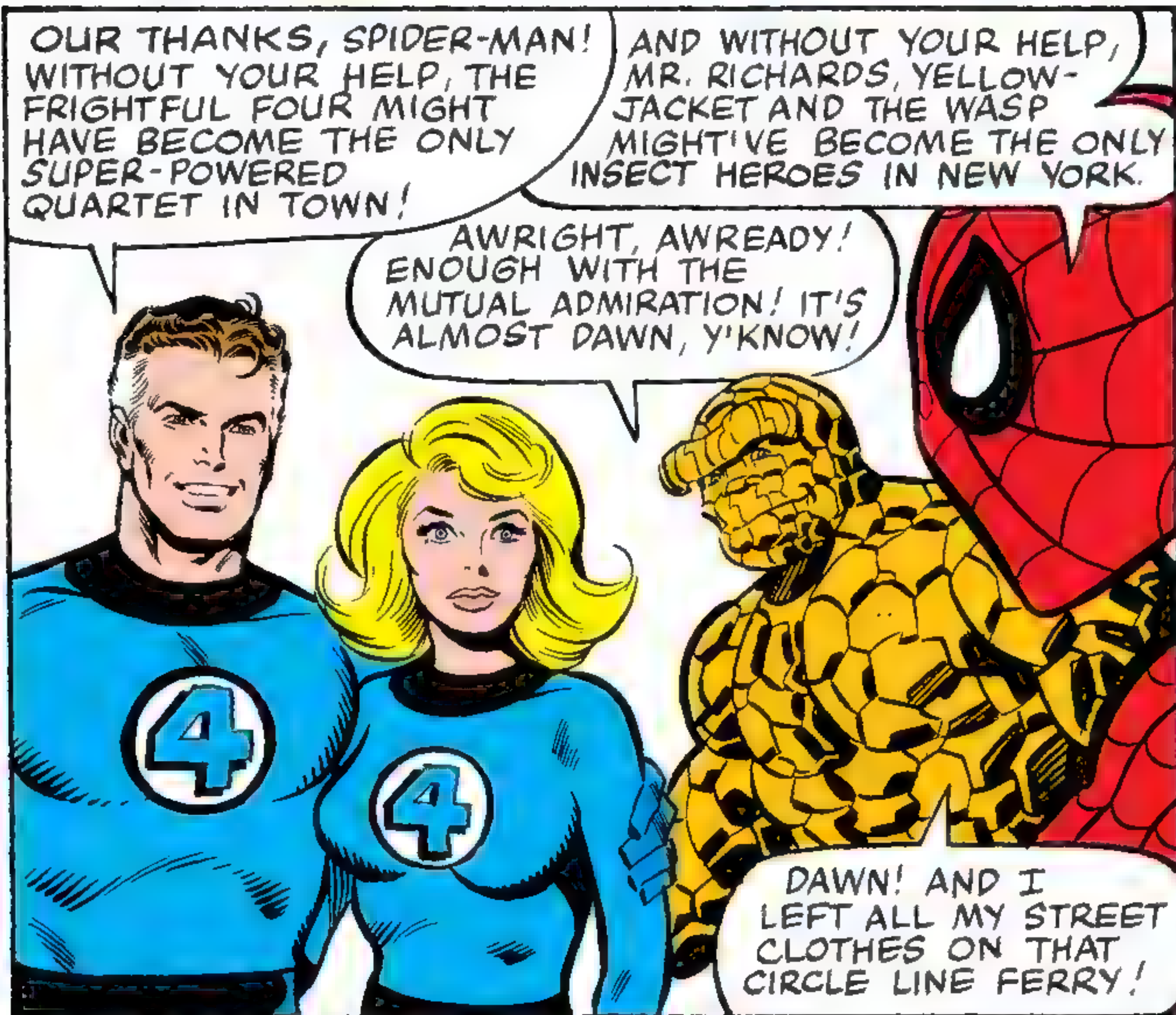
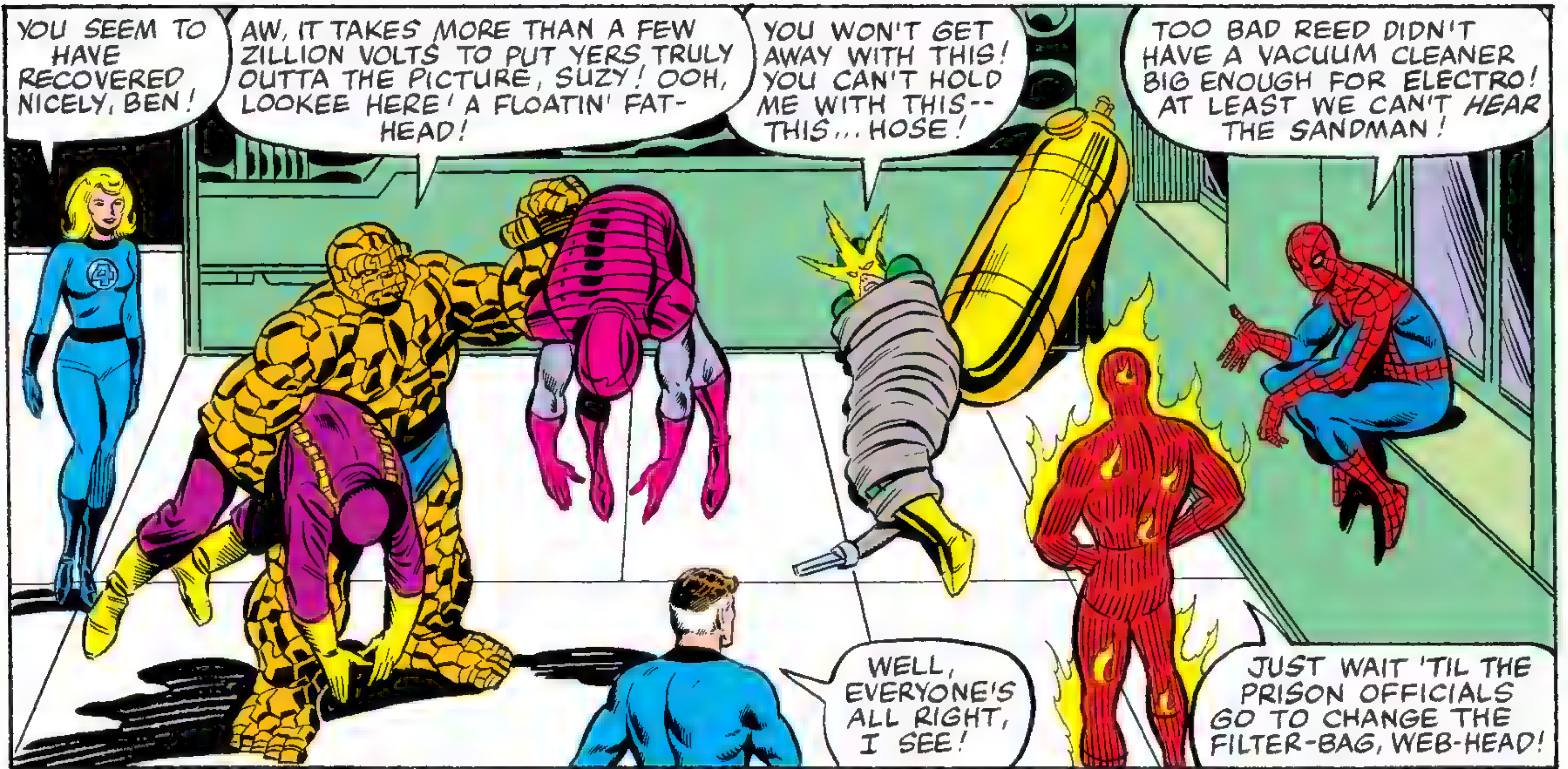


HOW 'BOUT YOU, PASTE-POT? YOU GOT ANY PARTICULAR WAY YOU'D LIKE TO GO?

I-I-AY-YI-YIII!

NOW AIN'T THAT CUTE? PETE'S FAINTED!





NEXT THE SAVAGE SUB-MARINER!

SPECIAL BONUS: The Silver Surfer and Galactus get existential in this story, set during the time when the Surfer was still herald to Galactus, from *Epic Illustrated* #1 (Spring 1980).

THE ANSWER

THE PLANET IS NAMELESS. IT NEEDS NO NAME. NONE CAN FIND IT. NONE CAN REACH IT. NONE CAN TROD ITS LONG-DEAD SURFACE. NONE BUT TWO. THESE TWO. THIS IS THEIR STORY.

WE STAND ON THE MOST REMOTE ASTEROID IN ALL THE UNIVERSE. AND YET--

THE MYSTERY REMAINS. WHAT LIES BEYOND? WHERE DOES IT END?

A TALE OF THE SILVER SURFER

Writer: Stan Lee
Penciler/Layouts: John Buscema

Inker/Finishes: Rudy Nebres
Color Artist: Rick Veitch

Letterer: John Costanza
Editor: Archie Goodwin

WE HAVE COME
THIS FAR. WE MUST
GO FURTHER. WE
MUST LEARN THE
ANSWER.



NONE THAT LIVE CAN KNOW
THE ANSWER.

NOT
EVEN
YOU?



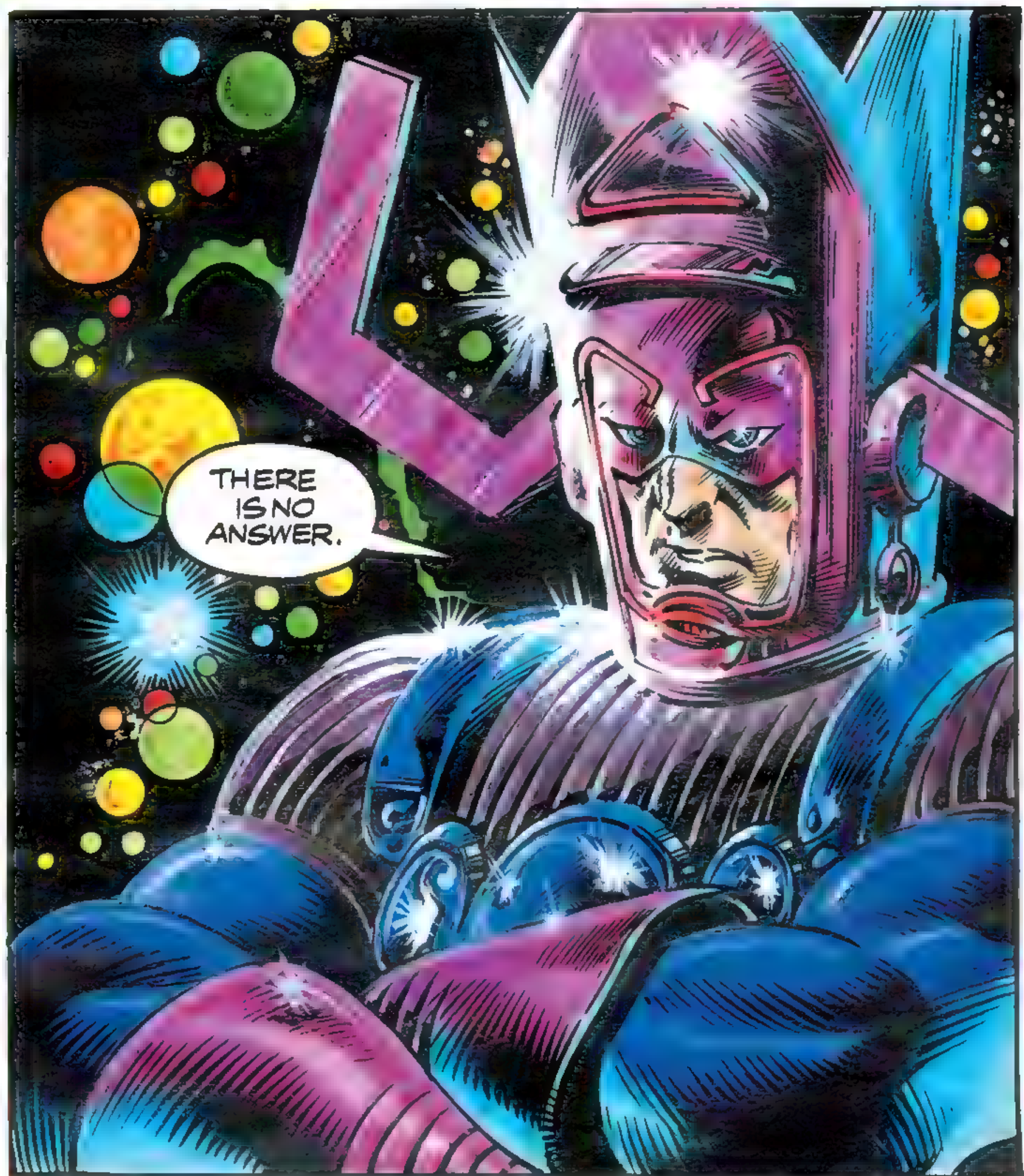
I AM GALACTUS.
THOUGH I AM MORE
THAN MAN, STILL AM
I LESS THAN GOD.

AND I AM BUT YOUR
HERALD--LESS THAN
A FLEETING FLYSPECK
ON THE ENDLESS
TAPESTRY OF SPACE.

BUT EVEN A
FLYSPECK CAN
YEARN TO KNOW--
TO DISCOVER--
TO LEARN THE
ANSWER.



THERE
IS NO
ANSWER.





YOU LIE! THERE IS NO PERFECT SECRET! THERE IS NO LOCK WITHOUT A KEY!



I AM A STRANGER TO UNTRUTH. MINE IS THE POWER ABSOLUTE. GALACTUS HAS NO CAUSE TO LIE.

THEN JOIN ME IN THE QUEST. LET US SEE WHAT LIES BEYOND THE COSMOS. ONLY WE CAN FIND THE ANSWER.

THERE IS NO ANSWER.



I SPEAK THE TRUTH. AND YET, I KNOW THE GNAWING DOUBT, THE SEETHING AGONY THAT BURNS WITHIN YOUR BREAST. IN AGES PAST, GALACTUS, TOO, HAS FELT SUCH YEARNING.

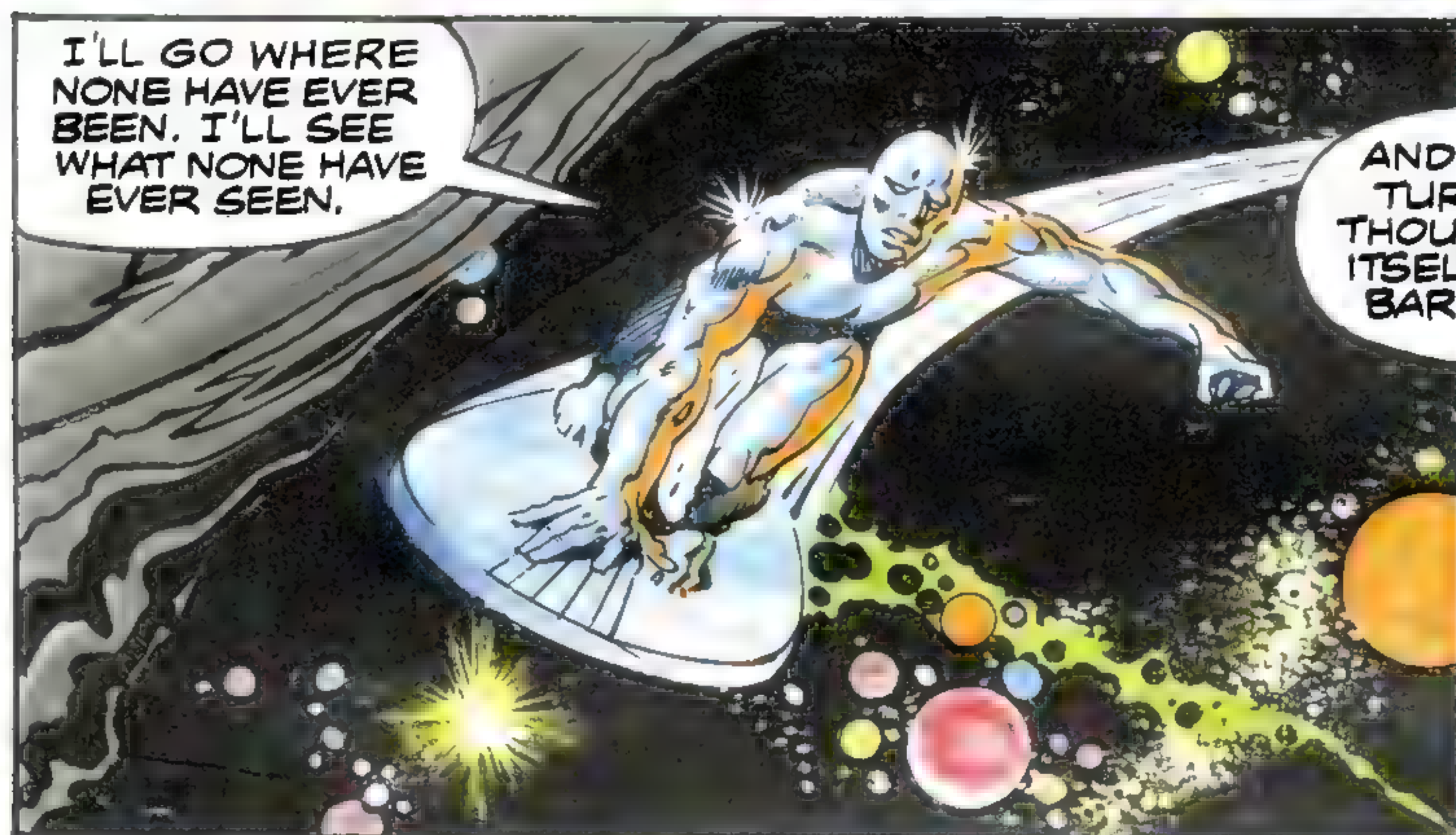
GO, THEN. SEEK THE ANSWER IF YOU MUST.

I MUST.



THE POWER COSMIC IS MINE TO COMMAND-- TO STRIP AWAY THE FINAL VEIL OF DARKNESS.

AT LAST I'LL SEE WHAT WAITS BEYOND THE FARTHEST STAR--WHAT LIES BEYOND THE BRINK OF TIME ITSELF.



HOW CAN WE, WITH MERELY MORTAL
SKILLS, REVEAL THE UNREVEALABLE?
HOW CAN YOU, WITH MERELY MORTAL
EYES, BEHOLD THE UNBEHOLDABLE?

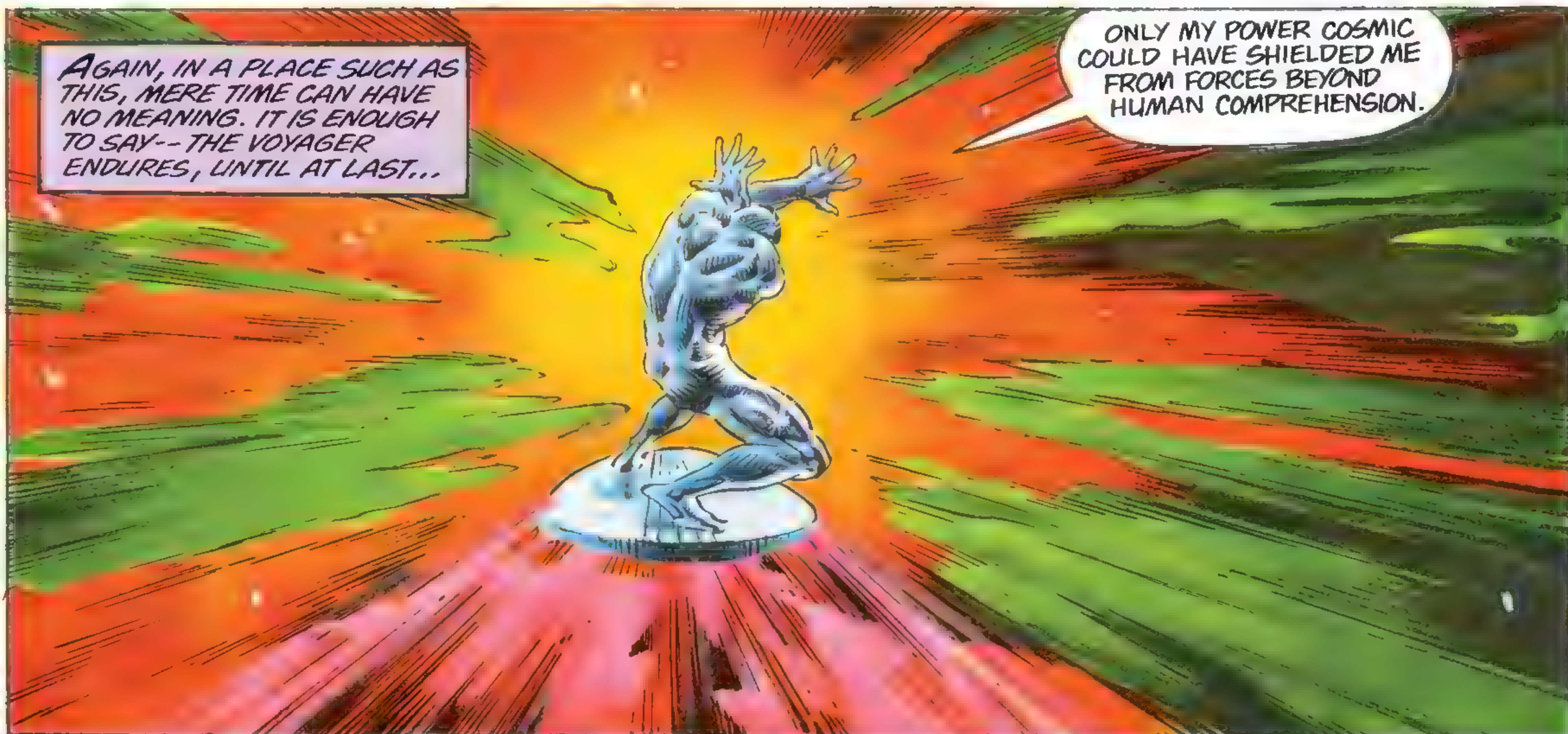
WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU IS BUT A
PALE AND GOSSAMER REPRESENTATION
OF THE MOST INDESCRIBABLY AWESOME
JOURNEY EVER DARED.

I'M DRAWN INTO
A FROZEN,
BURNING MAELSTROM
OF LIVING
NOTHINGNESS.

ALL
AROUND ME--
POWER, SUCH AS NONE
HAVE EVER KNOWN.
CHURNING, BLINDING,
DEAFENING. POWER,
WITHOUT LIMIT,
WITHOUT LET.

DEEPER AND DEEPER
IT SUCKS ME INTO THE
SWIRLING, SEETHING
CENTER--TOWARDS
THE VERY HEART OF
THE MONSTROUS,
ALIEN VOID.





AGAIN, IN A PLACE SUCH AS THIS, TIME CAN HAVE NO MEANING. IT IS ENOUGH TO SAY-- THE VOYAGER ENDURES, UNTIL AT LAST...

ONLY MY POWER COSMIC COULD HAVE SHIELDED ME FROM FORCES BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION.



BUT NOW, THE PRESSURE EASES. MY SPEED SLACKENS. THE JOURNEY NEARS ITS END.



ALL IS QUIET. I'VE REACHED MY GOAL.

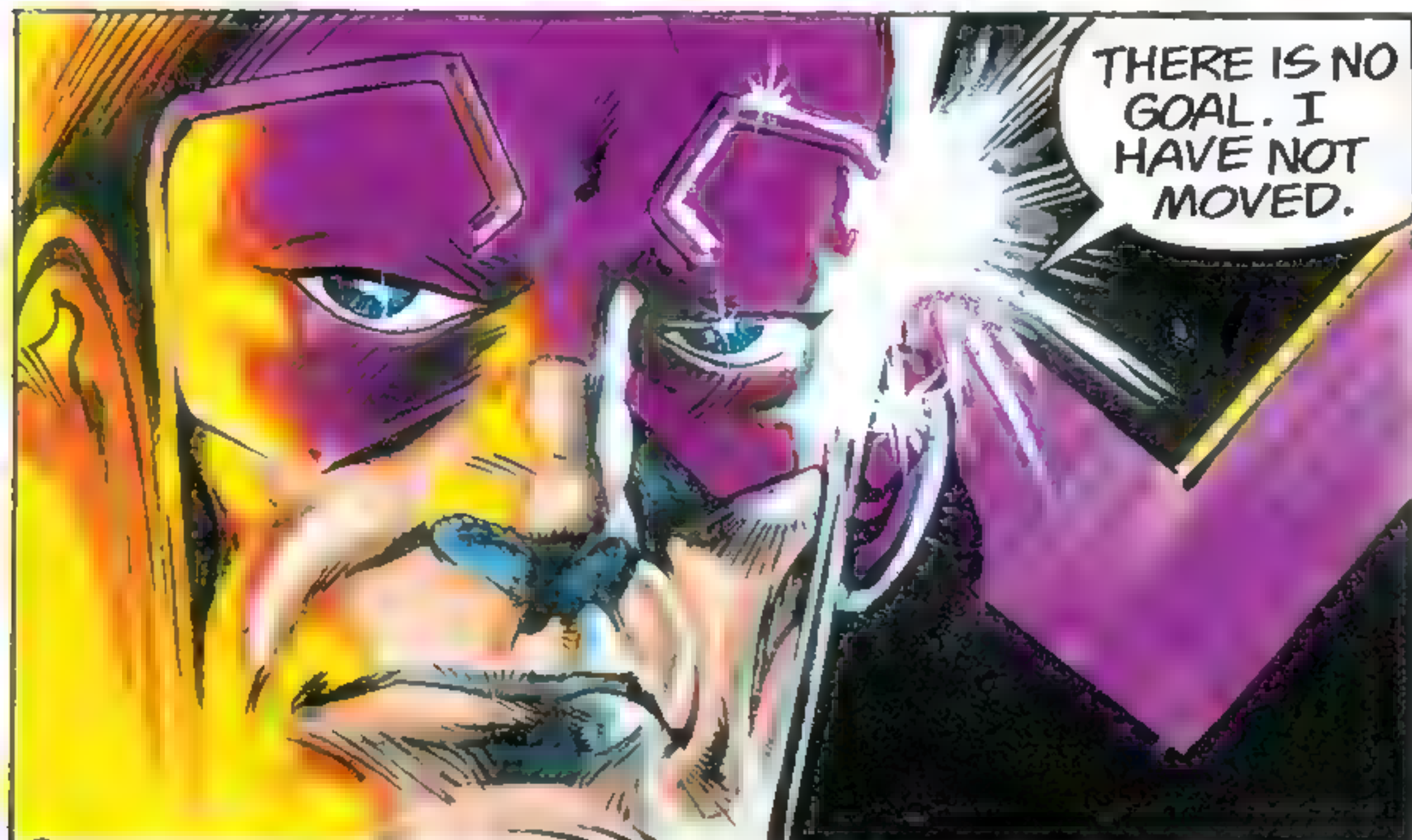
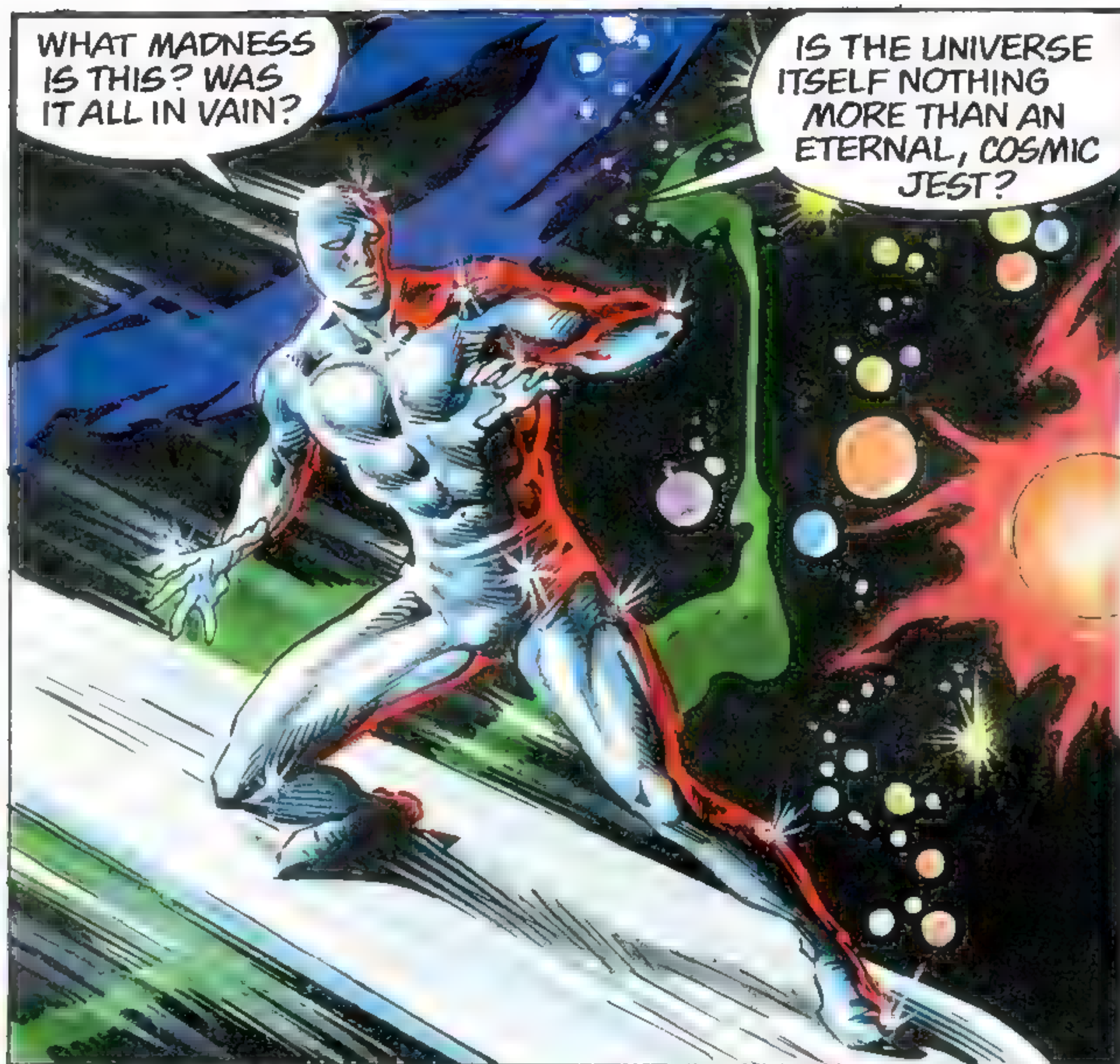
WHEN NEXT MY EYES ARE OPENED, I'LL BEHOLD WHAT MAN HAS NEVER SEEN.



AND NOW, TO GAZE UPON THE ANSWER TO THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIV--

NO NO

NO!





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FANTASTIC FOUR®

BEHOLD...
GALACTUS!

reprinted the Stan Lee/John Buscema Galactus epic from *The Fantastic Four* #120-123



F.O.O.M. #22 (Autumn 1978) back cover pencils
by Bob Budiansky



F.O.O.M. #22 (Autumn 1978) back cover
by Bob Budiansky & Joe Sinnott



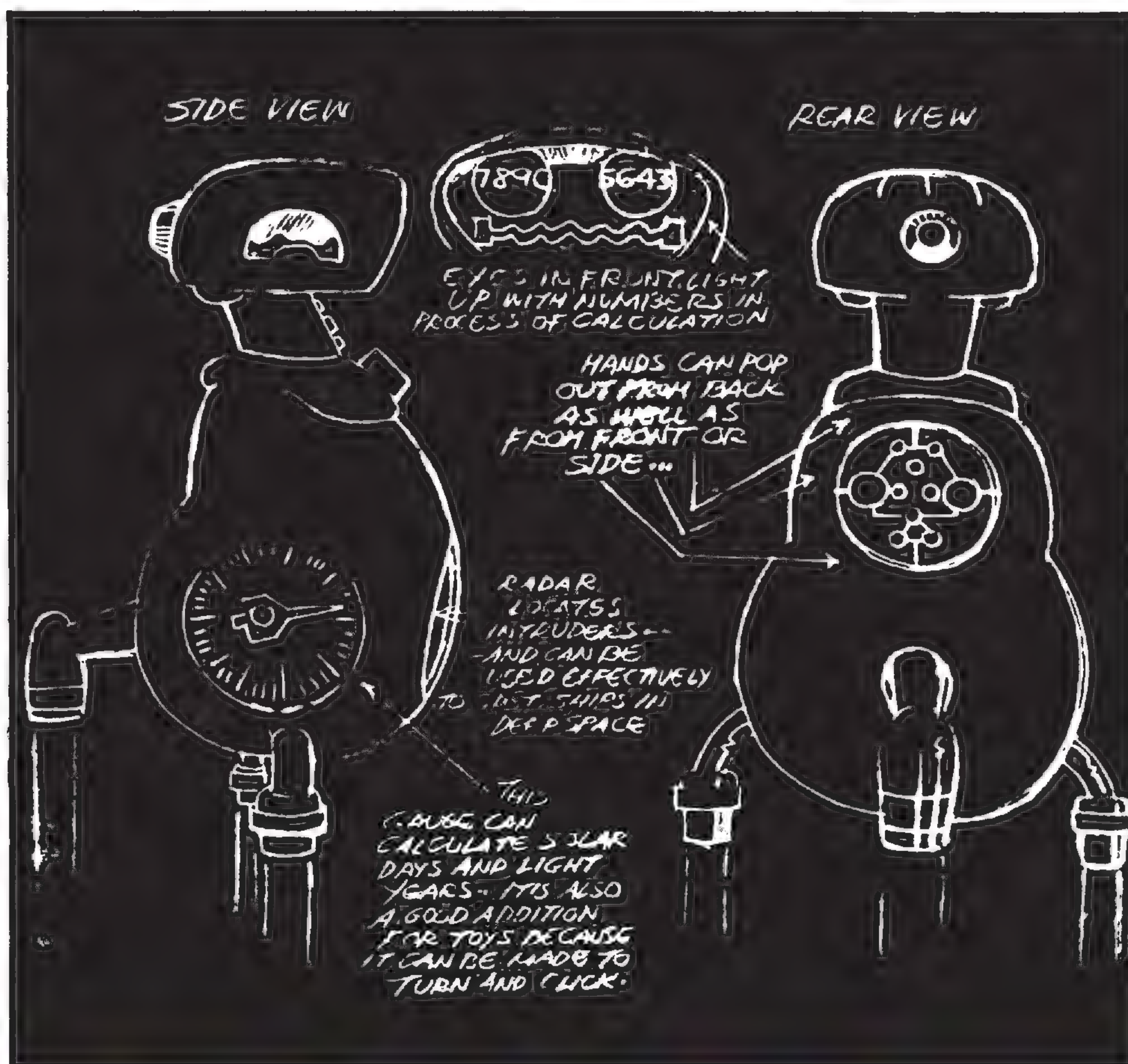
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F.O.O.M. #22 (Autumn 1978) article on
The New Fantastic Four Show Saturday morning cartoon

Exclusive FOOMtastic Feature:

HERBIE THE ROBOT BLUEPRINTS!



THE ALL-NEW FANTASTIC FOUR SHOW IS HERE!

AT LAST! MIGHTY MARVEL COMICS CO-PRODUCES AND PRESENTS THE ANIMATED ADVENTURES OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAG HEROES EVERY SATURDAY MORNING ON NBC!

IT'S THE MARVEL AGE OF TV SENSATIONS!

DON'T MISS IT!

AND WAIT TILL YOU MEET HERBIE!

Bottom: December 1978 (left) and August 1979 (right) house ads for *The New Fantastic Four Show* cartoon



STAN LEE PRESENTS:

The FANTASTIC FOUR Cartoon Show



They said it couldn't be done!

They said we couldn't reunite the titanic talents of *Stan (the Man) Lee* and *Jack (King) Kirby*!

When we did that on the sensational all-new, all-great **SILVER SURFER** book from Simon-and-Schuster, they said we couldn't come back to sweep Saturday morning TV with an animated Marvel feature series!

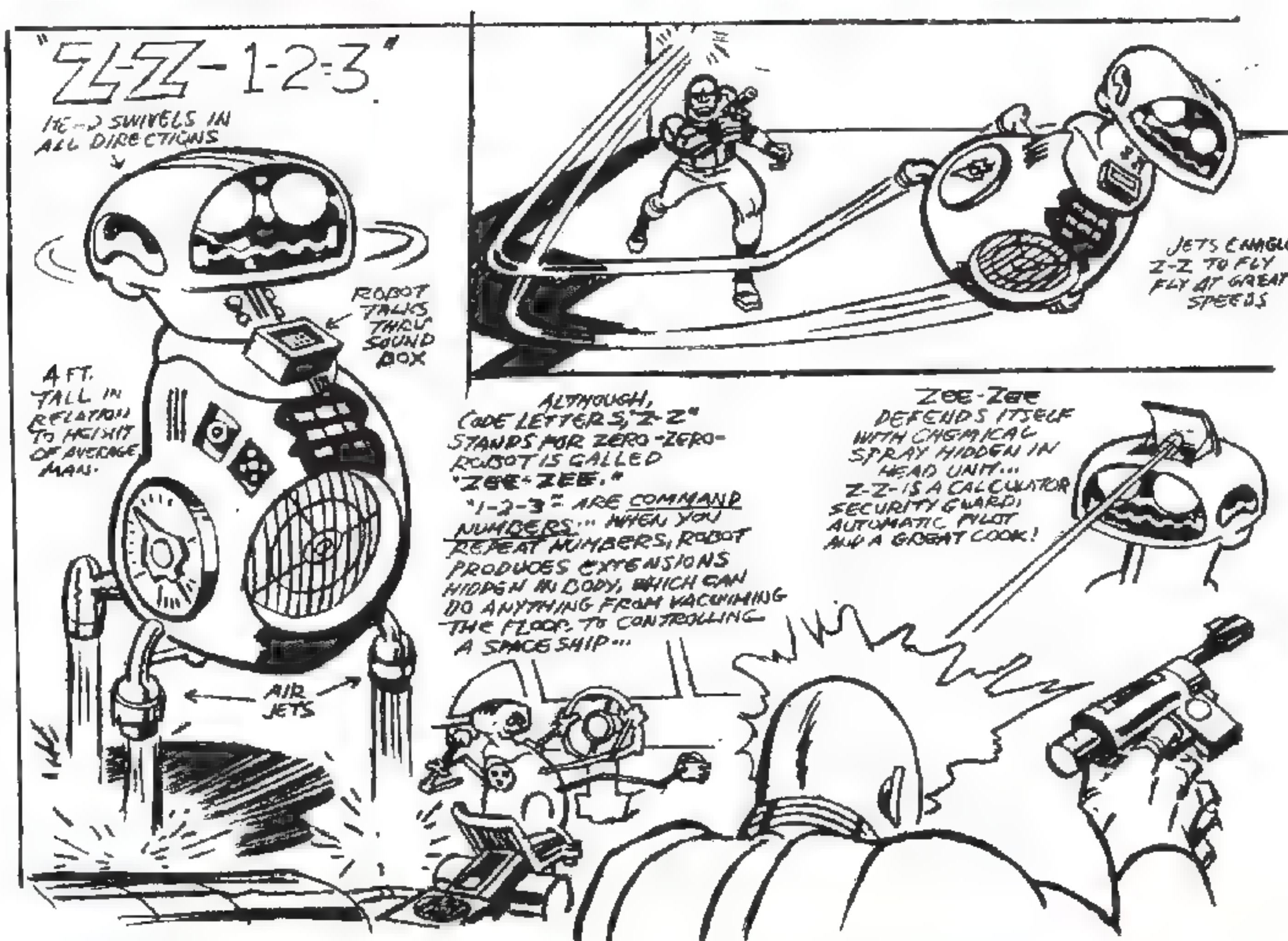
They were wrong!

Because mighty Marvel is—as ever—on the move, and we're making our push to become Masters of the Media! Yes, it's true! In case you haven't heard, faithful FOOMer, the Marvel Comics Group has just recently joined in pandemonious partnership with DePatie-Freleng, an awesome animation studio responsible for many of your favorite cartoon features.

The result is **THE NEW FANTASTIC FOUR SHOW**, with rock 'em-sock 'em storyboards by King Kirby and slam-bang scripts by Stan the Man and others, including Rascally Roy Thomas!

Since the new season is already started on TV, you've no doubt seen the riotous results—but we thought you'd appreciate a peek behind the scenes, so we're reproducing here some of Jack's original designs and ideas for the "funtastic" robotic addition to the Fantastic Four.

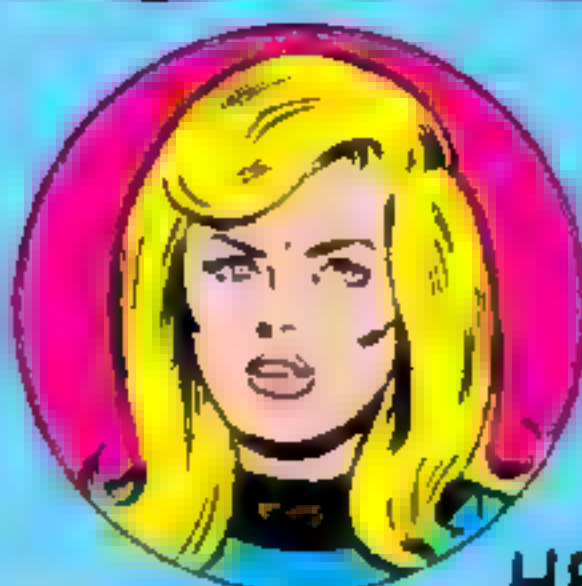
And remember: Mighty Marvel is on the march in the media!



Original Jack Kirby character design sketches for the new fourth member of the fabulous FF on TV—now known as none other than "Herbie," of course!

THE ALL NEW FANTASTIC FOUR IS HERE!

THE BOLDEST,
MOST EXCITING
ANIMATED ACTION
SERIES IS THE
SMASH HIT OF
THE SEASON!



CO-PRODUCED
BY MARVEL--IT'S
MADE **SATURDAY**
MORNINGS ON
NBC THE PLACE
TO BE!

ALL NEW!
HERBIE, THE ROBOT!

'NUFF SAID!

Top: May 1979 house ad for *The New Fantastic Four Show* cartoon
Bottom: Joe Sinnott FF pinup from *The Fantastic Four* #218's letters page



B I O G R A P H I E S

MARV WOLFMAN

Marv Wolfman's stints writing for movies, television, animation and novels mark him as a varied and highly regarded talent, but it is his comic book writing where he first gained prestige as one of the industry's most acclaimed talents.

His first forays into the comic industry were short tenures as editor and writer for both Warren Publishing and DC Comics, but it was after a move to Marvel in 1972 that his career began to blossom. One of his earliest hits was *Tomb of Dracula*, Marvel's adaptation of the classic Bram Stoker vampire. It was in the pages of *Tomb of Dracula* that Wolfman and Gene Colan unveiled the character Blade, the vampire hunter. This earthly hero was one of the earliest black heroes in comics and was introduced to further affirm the realism he sought to inject into the Dracula comic.

After editing Marvel's black-and-white magazines, he quickly stepped up the ladder to follow Len Wein as editor in chief. Wolfman had noted that the readership, who like himself had become loyal fans in their adolescence, felt it was important to have the stories Marvel produced "grow up" along with them. His editorial duties, however, stole time from his writing, so in 1976 he stepped down and took on writing full-time.

As writer of *Daredevil*, his two-year run preceded the Frank Miller era and included the introduction of Bullseye, now the most innovative and fearsome of Daredevil's rogues' gallery. Other work from his prolific Marvel tenure in the late '70s included lengthy runs on Marvel's two flagship titles: *The Amazing Spider-Man* (including the debut of the Black Cat) and *Fantastic Four* as well runs on *Nova*, *Doctor Strange* and *Thor*.

Moving to DC, he teamed with artist George Pérez and ushered in *New Teen Titans*. Most of the Titans came to life under his auspices, including Cyborg, Nightwing, Starfire, and Raven, as well as their nemesis Deathstroke. Next, Wolfman and Pérez delivered the epochal *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, condensing DC's complex 50 year history into a single, shared universe.

Taking a lengthy sabbatical from writing comics, Wolfman moved to writing for animation shows including *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers*, later becoming comics editor for *Disney Adventures Magazine*. He continues to write for DC Comics and more recently, has penned the nonfiction *Homeland, the Illustrated History of the State of Israel*. In 2011 Marv was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

JOHN BYRNE

With his naturalistic style captivating legions of fans, John Byrne became one of the most influential and popular comic artists of the '70s and '80s. Born in England but raised in Canada, with four years of art school training under his belt,

Byrne headed straight for the comics business, getting his start with Charlton Comics.

He produced his first original creations, the robot Rog-2000—which appeared as a backup strip in *E-Man*—and *Doomsday +1* at Charlton. Though the art was rough compared to his later standards, it drew the attention of Marvel Comics, where he found work on *Champions*, *Iron Fist* and *Marvel Team-Up*. The relationship he established on these books with writer Chris Claremont led to his entry on a title that was rapidly ascending in importance at Marvel: the "All-New, All-Different" *X-Men*.

Taking the torch from Dave Cockrum, for the next five years Byrne penciled and co-plotted the adventures of Marvel's mutants. His fresh style translated perfectly to the new cast of characters, and together Byrne and Claremont built the X-Men into a keystone title at Marvel. However, just after the twin triumphs of "The Dark Phoenix Saga" and "Days of Future Past," Byrne left the book.

His next major achievement was a long run as writer/artist on *Fantastic Four* that restored the title to its imaginative best. His run hearkened back to the glory days of Lee and Kirby and is arguably the milestone achievement of his career. Other high points in his early '80s Marvel work included "War and Remembrance," a bracing set of Captain America stories with Roger Stern and *Alpha Flight*, a team of Canadian heroes written and drawn by Byrne.

Next, Byrne headed to DC Comics to revive the flagging Superman franchise with a reset of the Superman mythos that was enormously popular at the time and is still hailed as a masterpiece decades later. After two years helming Superman, Byrne returned to Marvel to work on a diverse set of books including the New Universe's *Star Brand*, the irreverent *Sensational She-Hulk* and the high-tech adventures of Iron Man. In the 1990s, Byrne launched his creator-owned series *Next Men*, scripted the first issues of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* and delivered the goods for both Marvel and DC on numerous titles. Today, the implacable Byrne continues to write, draw and preside over a popular website. He was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame in 2015.

JOHN BUSCEMA

Though primarily known for his long tenure as one of Marvel Comics' most prolific pencilers, John Buscema began his celebrated career at the age of 21 with Timely Comics. After Timely closed its in-house Bullpen, Buscema pursued comics work for a time before he left comics altogether for advertising in 1958.

When he returned to comics, however, he did so with a vengeance. Stan Lee recruited him away from advertising and quickly ensconced him into the upper ranks of Marvel artists. Picking up where *Avengers* mainstay Don Heck left off, "Big

John” began what would be one of the title’s definitive artistic runs. The much-anticipated *Silver Surfer* series was launched with Buscema at the helm, and top-tier books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* were entrusted to his care after Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics.

Buscema’s bold, muscular artwork commanded the comic-book page with realistic figurework that represented the next evolutionary step in post-Kirby Marvel Comics style. The respect accorded him within Marvel as an artist’s artist was of such renown that he literally wrote the book on drawing, composing *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* with Stan Lee, the classic “how to” book in comic-book illustration.

He worked from the ’70s through the ’90s on nearly every title in the Marvel stable, including his personal favorite, *Conan the Barbarian*, with Roy Thomas. He retired in 1996, but returned every now and then to the comics scene until he passed away after a battle with cancer in 2002, the same year he was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

SAL BUSCEMA

Without a doubt one of comics’ most prolific artists, “Our Pal” Sal Buscema joined Marvel in 1968 shortly after his elder brother, John. Tackling inking duties on *Silver Surfer* and *Fantastic Four*, including the all-time classic *Silver Surfer* #4, Buscema quickly graduated to penciling. He was an anchor of the Marvel line in the 1970s with long runs on books like *Captain America*, *Marvel Team-Up* and *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and a 100-plus issue run on *The Incredible Hulk*. Buscema was also behind defining the tone on early issues of *The Defenders*, *Rom* and *The New Mutants*. His career as one of Marvel’s most versatile artists lasted throughout the ’70s and into the ’90s. In 1988, he returned to *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and over the next ten years penciled every issue but two from #134 through #238 (and inked the vast majority as well!) Although he retired in the late ’90s, readers can still see his name on comics credits from time to time, including inking work on the cult hit *Spider-Girl*.

PETER GILLIS

Peter B. Gillis’ notched sustained runs on *Doctor Strange*, *Micronauts* and *The Defenders*, but it was the world of *Strikeforce: Morituri* that remains his most lasting contribution to comics. Starting in 1978, Gillis wrote fill-in issues of various Marvel titles, as well as periodic issues of *Captain America*, *Marvel Two-In-One* and *Super-Villain Team-Up*. He also contributed to several issues of *What If?*, with highlights including “What If Spider-Man Had Stopped the Burglar Who Killed His Uncle?” and “What If Hulk’s Girlfriend Jarella Had Not Died?”

In 1983, Gillis began his association with independent comics publisher First Comics by adapting the Broadway sci-fi/comics fantasy play *Warp* with Frank Brunner. Next for First, Gillis wrote *Shatter*, the industry’s first all-digitally produced comic done in collaboration with Mike Saenz. Meanwhile at Marvel,

Gillis settled into a long run writing *The Defenders*, the 1984 relaunch of *Micronauts* and the first eight issues of an *Eternals* limited series. He began writing *Doctor Strange* in 1985, and hung with the series as it transferred to titles including *Strange Tales* and *Doctor Strange, Sorcerer Supreme*.

Gillis’ most celebrated work, *Strikeforce: Morituri*, debuted in 1986. Drawn by Brent Anderson, it told the story of a cadre of soldiers granted super powers to fight off an alien invasion, though at the eventual cost of their own lives. Gillis wrapped up his comic-writing career in the late ’80s and early ’90s, writing *Tailgunner Jo* and *Gammarauders* for DC, and stories for Marvel anthologies *Marvel Comics Presents*, *Solo Avengers* and *What The?*

STAN LEE

Stanley Lieber was born in New York City in 1922, the oldest son of Jewish immigrants from Romania. Upon an early graduation from high school, Stan was thrust in to the Depression-era economy. Meanwhile, Martin Goodman’s Timely Comics needed staff, and Stan, Goodman’s wife’s cousin, joined as an assistant editor. His youthful aspiration was to one day write the “Great American Novel,” so for his comic book work he adopted a pseudonym: Stan Lee. This way, he could reserve his real name for that novel-to-be.

He quickly graduated from simple text pieces to full-length stories, and before long his proficiency on the job earned him the position of managing editor while still a teenager. His tenure in the ’50s saw the company’s expansion (under the name Atlas) to include horror, crime, Western, war, satire and romance comics.

All this was a prelude to the Marvel Age of Comics, ushered in under the auspices of Stan Lee and a small stable of artists including the formidably talented Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. Responding to Martin Goodman’s challenge to find a way to revitalize dwindling sales, Lee figured he would co-opt the super-hero revival at DC Comics and add his own magic to the mix: Instead of being perfect invulnerable champions, Marvel’s heroes would be normal, fallible, imperfect people forced to cope with their newfound superhuman traits just as the average person might.

Lee’s innovation sent shock waves throughout comics, and within a few years, Marvelmania was taking hold. Under his direction, the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Thor, Doctor Strange and the Incredible Hulk flourished in the shared universe they inhabited. Lee developed the idea that these larger-than-life heroes would meet each other in crossovers from title to title, thus broadening the story possibilities for eager fans.

In addition to bringing a new twist to the life of the super hero, Lee also brought the reader inside Marvel’s “Batty Bullpen,” creating a sense of camaraderie and special membership. His friendly and enthusiastic banter in letters pages, house ads and Bullpen Bulletins brought Marvel Comics to a level of familiarity with their fans that had kids and college students proudly professing themselves to be “True Believers.”

At one time, Lee wrote virtually every comic that Marvel published during the '60s. But when he was promoted to publisher in 1971, his writing had to take a backseat, and by the mid-'70s, he semi-retired from scripting duties. Over the years, Lee has returned to write scripts for the occasional single issue or series, focusing on Marvel's ventures into television and movie development. His standing in the field was recognized with his induction into the Eisner Hall of Fame in 1994, and to this day, he remains Marvel Comics' single greatest ambassador to the world.

BILL MANTLO

From the mid-'70s through the late-'80s, Bill Mantlo established himself as one of the most dedicated writers in the comics industry, writing hundreds of stories across dozens of titles, primarily for Marvel Comics.

Mantlo broke into comics as a colorist, but it wasn't long before he was given a crack at writing a fill-in story, a "Sons of the Tiger" story in the black-and-white *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* magazine, and his true comics talent began to emerge. The quality of his work led to his installation as that book's regular writer, a tenure that included the notable achievement of introducing comics' first Puerto Rican hero, the White Tiger.

After achieving notoriety within the Marvel offices as a guy who could knock out credible fill-in scripts at a moment's notice, Mantlo was given more regular work. One early highlight was his 20-issue tenure on *Iron Man* that began the Golden Avenger's return to prominence. As one might expect from someone with such a volume of work, Mantlo was game to take on projects others dismissed, and he did it with an unfeigned aplomb that elevated the work.

It was on two licensed titles that Mantlo built his legacy. Inspired by a toy given to his son at Christmas, Mantlo lobbied Marvel to adapt Micronauts into an ongoing series. The award-winning epic he spun with artistic luminaries like Michael Golden and Pat Broderick is still highly revered by comics fandom as is his even longer run on *Rom*, wherein he developed a universe filled with Spaceknights, Dire Wraith monsters and outer space intrigue. Other notable credits in Mantlo's career include *Incredible Hulk*, *Alpha Flight* and *Spectacular Spider-Man*.

Just as Mantlo had begun a new career as a public defender with the New York City Legal Aid Society, he was struck by a hit-and-run driver and went into a weeks-long coma from severe head trauma. He has since been under constant medical care. The comics community has led multiple fundraisers to aid in the continuing care of a talented writer who is missed by his many fans.

GEORGE PÉREZ

George Pérez's intricately detailed style and incomparable ability at drawing team books has made him one of comics' most popular artists. Like many of his early-'70s peers, Pérez broke in at Marvel drawing for their burgeoning line of black-

and-white magazines, most notably the "Sons of the Dragon" feature in *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu*. It was there he and Bill Mantlo introduced the Puerto Rican hero White Tiger. His first major work came during the latter half of the decade, where he became regular artist of both *Fantastic Four* and *Avengers* before a move to DC. There he took over *Justice League of America* from the late, long-running artist Dick Dillin, but it was a Marv Wolfman-scribed revival of DC's team of teen super heroes, *New Teen Titans*, that was a huge hit, owing especially to Pérez's evocative character designs and masterful line. He would work with Wolfman on the book for over six years. During this time the duo also helmed the epic miniseries *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, featuring the deaths of classic heroes like the Flash and Supergirl.

In 1987, he broadened his creative credentials with his first regular writing gig on *Wonder Woman*, a title he would also draw for the better part of five years. A return to Marvel in 1998 produced a chart-topping revival of *Avengers* with writer Kurt Busiek. This led the creative tandem to the popular DC/Marvel cross-company miniseries *JLA/Avengers*. His most recent credits include a 10-issue run drawing DC's *Brave and the Bold*, and a stint as writer/artist of a new *Superman* series.

KEITH POLLARD

One of its most high-profile artists in the late '70s and early '80s, Keith Pollard's tenure at Marvel was notable for his sleek, refined renderings of the company's most iconic characters. He broke in at Marvel in 1974, drawing such characters as Deathlok in *Astonishing Tales*, Shang-Chi in *Master of Kung Fu*, and the super-hero action of *Black Goliath*, *Ms. Marvel*, and Black Panther in *Jungle Action*. After a stint on the black-and-white *Rampaging Hulk* magazine, Pollard was ushered into the starting lineup of creators on three of Marvel's flagship titles.

Starting in 1978, Pollard provided breakdown art on *Fantastic Four* for the legendary Joe Sinnott to finish. Soon after landing his *FF* gig, he began penciling *The Amazing Spider-Man* and then took the reins from "Big" John Buscema on *Thor*, starting a run that would encompass the epic "Eternals Saga" storyline. All in all, Pollard's hand guided the visuals of these three prime Marvel titles simultaneously, and his tenures on each book are memorable additions to each title's legacy.

In the early '80s, Pollard took on a new stable of heroes at DC, drawing several issues of *Green Lantern* and launching *The Vigilante* with writer Marv Wolfman. He returned to regular series work at Marvel in 1989, once again drawing *Fantastic Four*. By 1995, Pollard retired from comics, although he is currently appearing at conventions and doing commissioned art for his fans.

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THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over the heads of all Americans, a new entertaining escape from the newspapers' horrifying realities was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States.

At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary talents as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These skilled writers and artists created a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

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ATLAS ERA STRANGE TALES VOLS. 1-6
ATLAS ERA TALES TO ASTONISH VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1

THE MARVEL AGE

It was August 1961 and change was hitting the newsstands. *Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. These were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves—and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different—the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

The *Marvel Masterworks* series was created to give comic-book readers everywhere the chance to experience the greatest comics the world has known as they were originally presented.

SGT. FURY VOLS. 1-4
THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN VOL. 1
SPIDER-WOMAN VOL. 1
THE SILVER SURFER VOLS. 1-2
THE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-7
WARLOCK VOLS. 1-2
THE X-MEN VOLS. 1-8
THE UNCANNY X-MEN VOLS. 1-10

GOLDEN AGE ALL-WINNERS VOLS. 1-4
GOLDEN AGE CAPTAIN AMERICA VOLS. 1-6
GOLDEN AGE DARING MYSTERY VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE HUMAN TORCH VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE MARVEL COMICS VOLS. 1-7
GOLDEN AGE MYSTIC COMICS VOL. 1
GOLDEN AGE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE U.S.A. COMICS VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures and unimaginable monsters; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the '40s retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, Atlas had it all!



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